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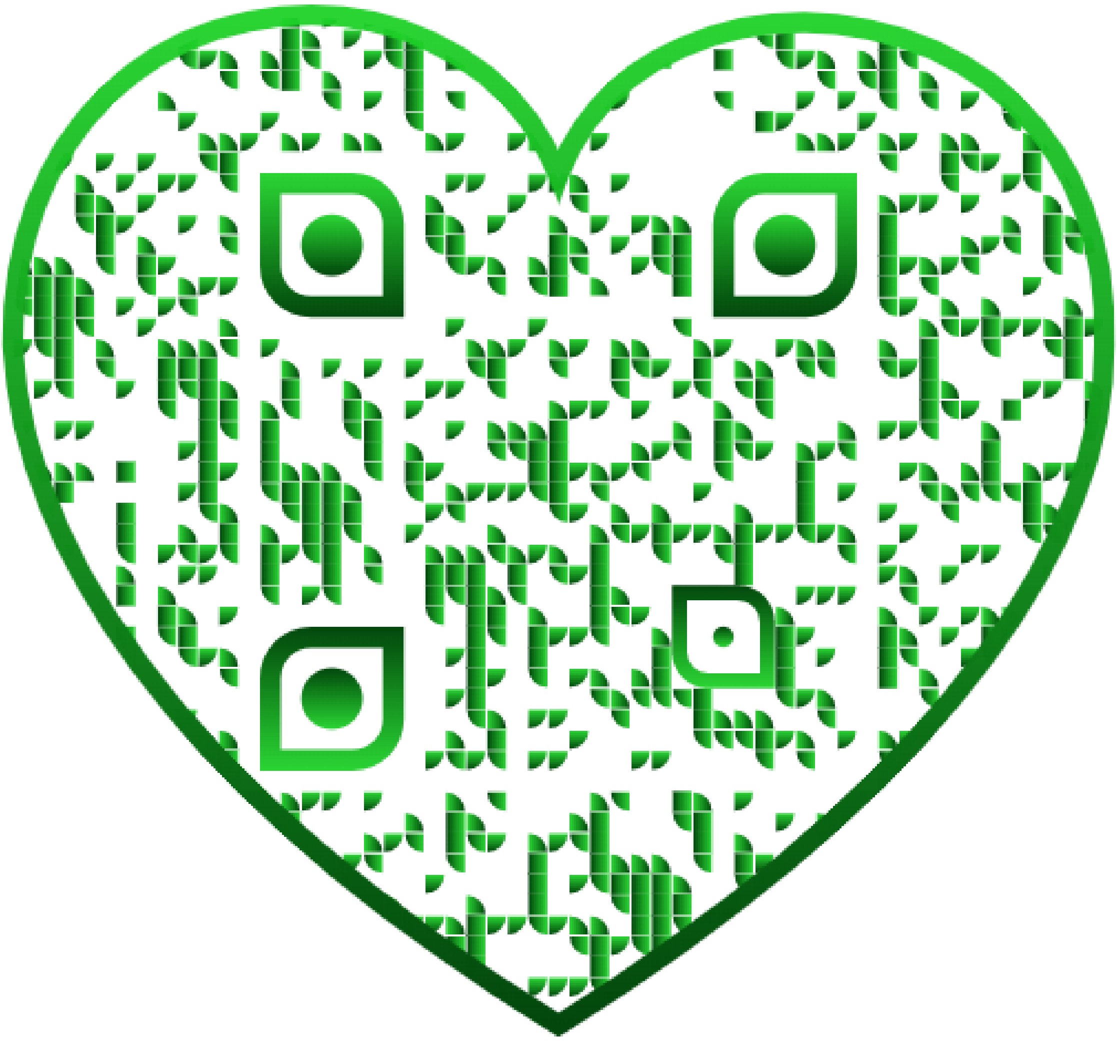

Welcome

World War II is the best described, most catalogued event in history. Thousands of books, hundreds of thousands of articles, and an abundance of documentaries and lectures describe the horrors of war, the battle strategies and, not least, the heroes who emerged from one of history's most horrific wars. But despite this vast archive of information, puzzles still remain. As the years go by, myths bloom up alongside facts. Did Hitler really die in the his bunker? Or did he escape to South America in a state-of-the-art submarine? Where is the gold stolen from the victims of the Holocaust? Is it still hidden in secret mines in Eastern Europe? And what drove the German people to embrace the extremes of Nazism, anti-Semitism and dreams of world domination? Join with us as we try to find the answers to the great Nazi mysteries.

> “The gold train’s cargo included 10 45-kg boxes of gold.”

Historians and treasure hunters still search for the truth about two missing Nazi gold trains. Read more on page 42.

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A train heavily loaded with gold stolen from victims of the Holocaust rolled out from Budapest in 1944. The train never reached its destination. Page 42

Hitler's fatal decisions

A number of Hitler's choices defy explanation. Perhaps the answers to his increasingly irrational decisions lie in the Führer's medicine cabinet. Page 58

German secret weapons

As the war roared on two fronts, the Third Reich's engineers worked in secret on weapons so incredible that they could change the fortunes of war. Page 70

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Even now, more than 80 years after the Nazis seized power, it's still a wonder how an Austrian painter could rise to the top of the German Empire. Page 92

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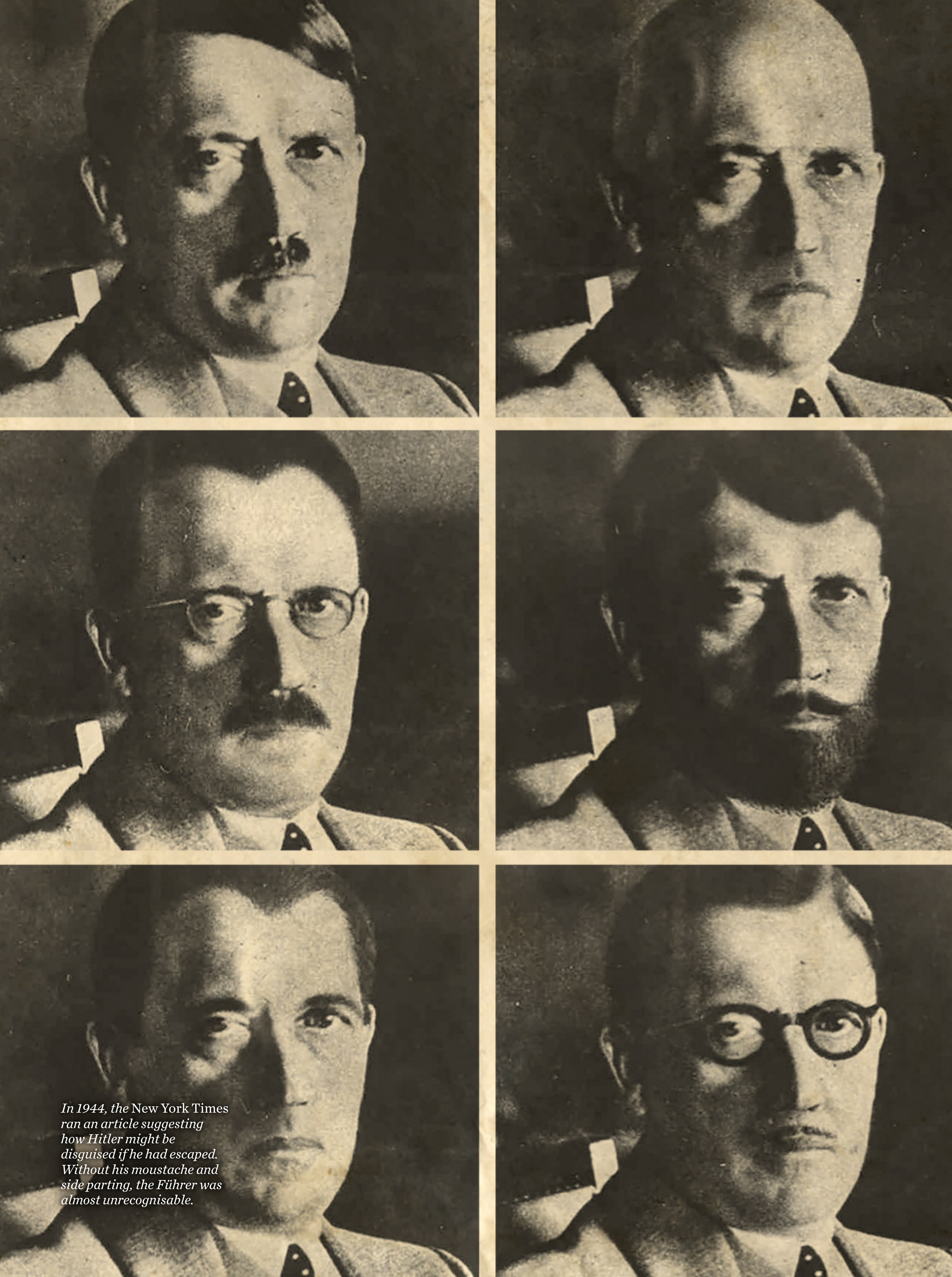
After the war, thousands of war criminals disappeared without trace. Some have since been found and convicted of their crimes, but many are still missing. Page 104

Meine Ehre heißt Treue



In 1944, the New York Times *ran an article suggesting how Hitler might be disguised if he had escaped. Without his moustache and side parting, the Führer was almost unrecognisable.*

WHAT HAPPENED TO HITLER?

On 1st May, 1945, Germany officially declared that Hitler was dead. Shortly afterwards, his earthly remains were consumed by fire, but speculation has remained ever since that the Nazi leader did not die at all, but rather fled Germany to safety in the last few hours of the war.

Even the most optimistic Nazis had given up any hope of winning the war – not even the Führer himself, the originator of the worst war atrocities ever committed.

The Allies were storming through Germany and Stalin's Red Army had established an iron-like cordon around Berlin, where Hitler was hiding in an underground bunker. Shells rained down on the German capital, but late on the evening of Friday, 27th April, 1945, the impacts barely registered in the Führer's office, which lay approximately ten metres beneath the surface.

In his study, Hitler stared into space and contemplated defeat. The miracle weapons he had hoped would turn the war had failed to live up to expectations, and his once proud empire had become a nation in free fall. The city lay in ruins, gunfire rang out on the streets and the Führer knew that it was only a matter of time before Soviet forces battled their way into the bunker and captured him.

> The idea of being taken to Moscow, dead or alive, to be paraded before an angry mob was not an option in his [Hitler's] mind.

With his back to the wall, Hitler had three options: he could surrender to the enemy, an intolerable humiliation for a man of the Führer's inflated pride and ego. The idea of being taken to Moscow, dead or alive, to be paraded before an angry mob was not an option in his mind. His second choice was to commit suicide – but who would then be in charge of continuing the fight for Nazism? That left the third and only acceptable solution: escape.

Hitler's right-hand man, **Martin Bormann**, and Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller had already drawn up a detailed plan to enable Hitler to escape the war-torn city. The plan would be put into operation at 00.20 on 28th April, 1945. Together with Eva Braun, the Führer would leave the bunker and escape through the U-Bahn rapid transit rail system to Hohenzollerndamm, one of Berlin's main streets, where a Junkers Ju 52 transport plane would be waiting. The plane would carry Hitler and Braun out of the country, first to Denmark and then on to the Canary Islands. Here, the Nazi couple would board a submarine for the long journey across the Atlantic to Argentina.

MARTIN BORMANN
was Hitler's private secretary and long regarded as number two in the Nazi succession.

Only Hitler's closest supporters would be privy to the escape plans and after the fall of Berlin, Soviet forces would find the ashes of two bodies, which they would mistakenly identify as Hitler and Braun and, thus, the disappearing act would be complete.

The ashes would be all that remained of the couple's murdered doppelgängers; pawns in an elaborate game that would fool the whole world into thinking that the world's most hated man was finally dead.

Hitler's escape from Berlin as outlined above is a controversial account of the Führer's fate at the end of World War II. The events are described in the 2011 book **Grey Wolf:** *The Escape of Adolf Hitler*. Simon Dunstan and Gerrard Williams, the book's authors, claim the story is based on eyewitness accounts and documents from various intelligence services.

GREY WOLF was written by British author Simon Dunstan, who, in collaboration with journalist Gerrard Williams, has written more than 50 books on World War II.

Russians hunt Hitler's remains

Historians reject the myth of Hitler's flight to Argentina as pure fiction, but an indisputable fact is that Hitler's destiny is surrounded by unsolved mysteries. However, what is clear is that at a little after 22.00 on Tuesday, 1st May, 1945, the German government made a broadcast to its people announcing the Führer's death: "From the headquarters, it is announced that our Führer, Adolf Hitler, has fallen this afternoon at his command post in the Reich Chancellery, fighting until his last breath against Bolshevism… On Monday [30th April], the Führer appointed Grand Admiral Dönitz as his successor".

Immediately after the shocking news of Hitler's death, Dönitz spoke: "The Führer has nominated me as his successor. In full consciousness of my responsibilities I therefore assume the leadership of the German people at this fateful hour. My first task is to save German men and women from destruction by the advancing Bolshevist enemy. It is to serve this purpose alone that the military struggle continues."

Dönitz demanded that German soldiers follow orders: "I expect discipline and obedience. Chaos and ruin can be prevented only by the swift and unreserved execution of my orders." But Dönitz had bitten off more than he could chew: the hour of defeat was near and nothing could stop Soviet forces storming Berlin. The next day, 2nd May, 1945, German troops in the capital surrendered, handing over their weapons to the Red Army.

A little after 15.00 on the same day, the Red Army occupied the Reich Chancellery, triggering a confusing series of events that continued to raise questions for years to come. The most crucial of which was what became of Adolf Hitler?

Keen to secure the greatest trophy of all – Adolf Hitler's last remains – agents of the Soviet Army intelligence service, SMERSH, immediately began searching the Reich Chancellery's devastated gardens, which had lain over the *Führerbunker* (Hitler's underground shelter). They found several burned and mutilated corpses within the grounds.

One of the dead men appeared to resemble Hitler and a sensational photo of the corpse was presented to the world's media. But

Continued on page 15

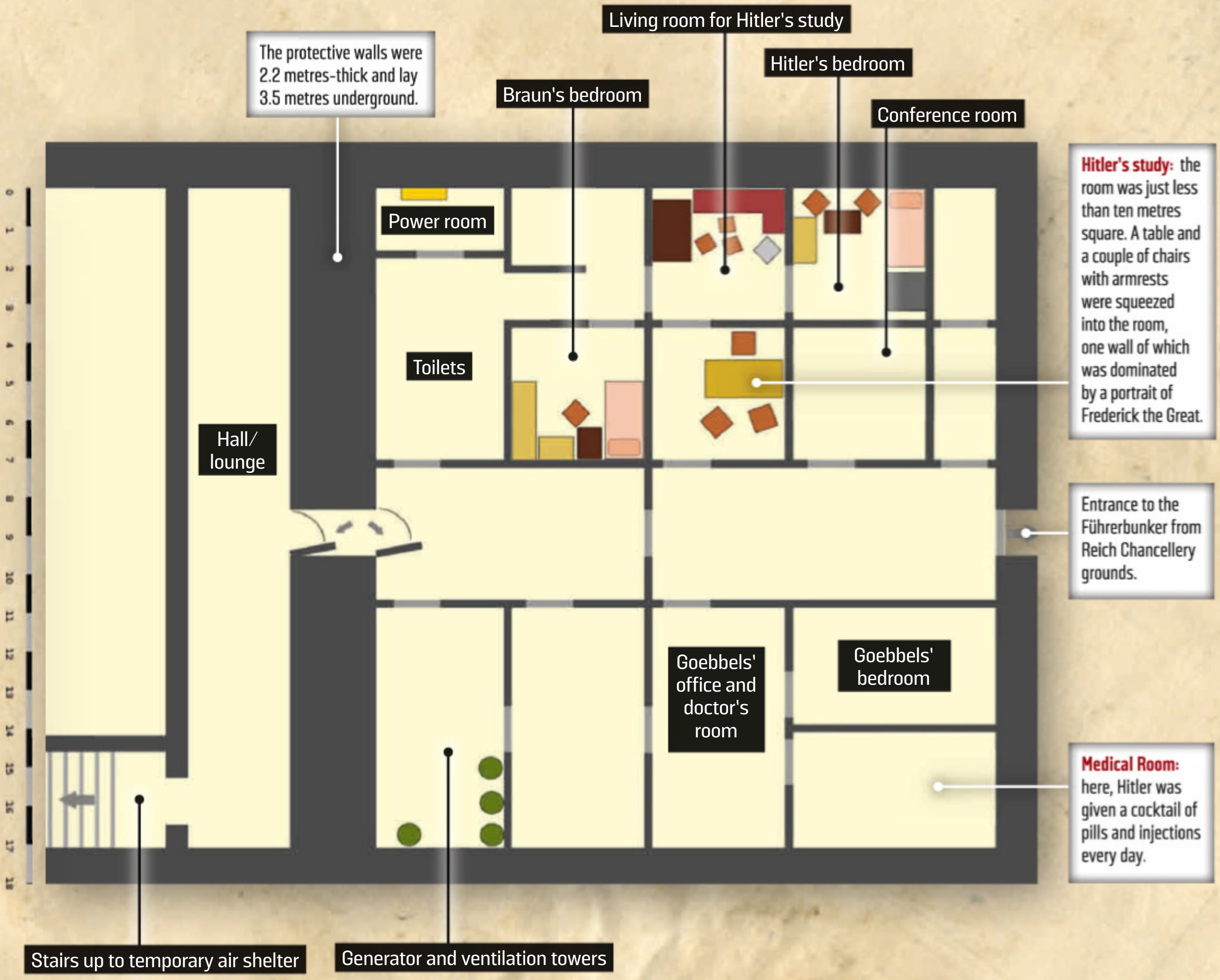
On 20th March, 1945, Hitler distributed a number of medals to soldiers from 12th SS-Panzer-Division Hitlerjugend *(Hitler Youth) in front of the Führerbunker. It was the last occasion he was seen in public.*

Hitler spent his last four months underground

The Führerbunker under the Reich Chancellery was protected by a layer of concrete that was more than two metres-thick. In the final days of war, it was the safest place in Berlin.

Unlike most other inhabitants of Berlin's burning ruins, Hitler and his inner circle were safe from the constant shelling in an underground bunker. Under a thick concrete ceiling, the residential complex was designed to serve as a mini-community with its own heating and lighting system, which were powered by a diesel generator. Hitler lived there from January 1945 until his death on 30th April, 1945. His German shepherd dog, Blondi, was only let outside in the Chancellery grounds occasionally when the Führer left his headquarters. After the war, Soviet engineers tried to blow up the Führerbunker, but it proved impossible, so they buried whole complex under a pile of earth instead.

In the 1980s the visible remains of the bunker were dismantled by the East German authorities who wanted use the area to build residential apartments. The remains of the bunker are now buried beneath a car park.


Living room for Hitler's study
Hitler's bedroom
Braun's bedroom
Conference room
Power room
Toilets
Hall/ lounge
Goebbels' office and doctor's room
Goebbels' bedroom
Stairs up to temporary air shelter
Generator and ventilation towers
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The protective walls were 2.2 metres-thick and lay 3.5 metres underground.

Hitler's study: the room was just less than ten metres square. A table and a couple of chairs with armrests were squeezed into the room, one wall of which was dominated by a portrait of Frederick the Great.

Entrance to the Führerbunker from Reich Chancellery grounds.

Medical Room: here, Hitler was given a cocktail of pills and injections every day.

From January to May

HITLER'S LAST DAYS

The Führerbunker under the Reich Chancellery's garden in Berlin was the setting for the last months' of Hitler's and Eva Braun's life. Under the ground, the Nazi dictator had a staff of loyal supporters.

16th January, 1945

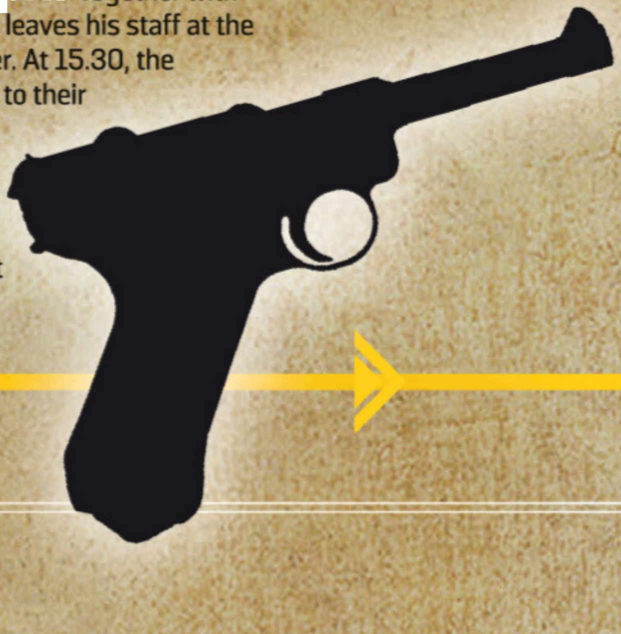
After intense air strikes on Berlin, Hitler moves into the Führerbunker with his inner circle.

26th April Generalfeldmarschall Robert Ritter von Greim flies to the Führerbunker, where Hitler makes him head of the Luftwaffe following Göring's betrayal. The short ceremony is filled by the sound of falling shells.

28th April The Führerbunker is cut off from the outside world. As a result, Hitler and his staff listen to the BBC for news from beyond the bunker. This is how Hitler learns that Himmler had negotiated a secret peace with the Allies.

29th April Soviet forces are just a few streets from the bunker. With defeat in sight, Hitler writes his will, marries Braun and kills his dog, Blondi.

30th April Together with Braun, Hitler leaves his staff at the Führerbunker. At 15.30, the couple retire to their private rooms. Shortly afterwards, both commit suicide.



16th April With a force of 2.5 million men the Red Army troops attack from the River Oder's east bank to storm Berlin. Eva Braun joins Hitler in the bunker.

20th April Hitler celebrates his 56th birthday in the bunker. The inner circle toasts the Führer, who remains aloof and distant.

21st April Soviet shells rain down over the Reich Chancellery grounds on top of the bunker. Hitler knows he is facing defeat, yet still orders his 9th Army to attack and break the ring of Soviet forces around Berlin.

22nd April The German's inner-defensive cordon in Berlin is broken. Hitler gives some staff permission to leave Berlin in a plane that is waiting to evacuate the Nazi elite.

23rd April Hermann Göring sends a telegram seeking Hitler's confirmation that he should take power if Hitler loses the ability to command. An angry Hitler orders Göring be arrested for high treason.

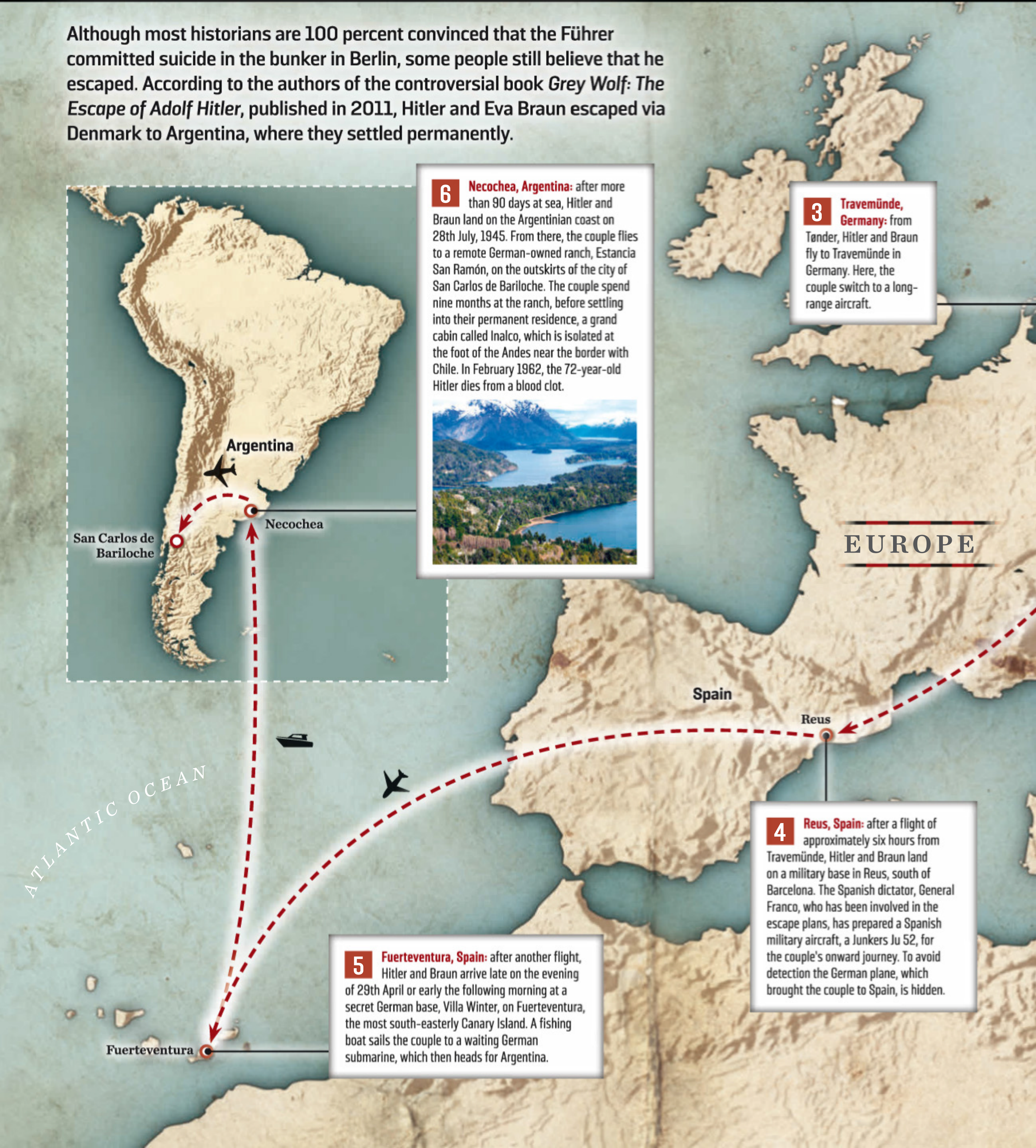
24th April Hitler orders work to transform the Nazi's triumphal avenue in Berlin into a runway. He hopes that German aircraft can land and save Berlin.

1st May Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and his wife, Magda, commit suicide in the Führerbunker. Before killing themselves, the pair slay their six children. German radio broadcasts the news of Hitler's death.

2nd May Soviet officers enter the Führerbunker. In the grounds of the Reich Chancellery, they find the remains of two bodies, which are later identified as Hitler and Braun. On the same day, the shelling finally ends in Berlin.

The flight to Argentina took place by plane and fishing boat

Although most historians are 100 percent convinced that the Führer committed suicide in the bunker in Berlin, some people still believe that he escaped. According to the authors of the controversial book *Grey Wolf: The Escape of Adolf Hitler*, published in 2011, Hitler and Eva Braun escaped via Denmark to Argentina, where they settled permanently.



3 Travemünde, Germany: from Tønder, Hitler and Braun fly to Travemünde in Germany. Here, the couple switch to a long-range aircraft.

4 Reus, Spain: after a flight of approximately six hours from Travemünde, Hitler and Braun land on a military base in Reus, south of Barcelona. The Spanish dictator, General Franco, who has been involved in the escape plans, has prepared a Spanish military aircraft, a Junkers Ju 52, for the couple's onward journey. To avoid detection the German plane, which brought the couple to Spain, is hidden.

5 Fuerteventura, Spain: after another flight, Hitler and Braun arrive late on the evening of 29th April or early the following morning at a secret German base, Villa Winter, on Fuerteventura, the most south-easterly Canary Island. A fishing boat sails the couple to a waiting German submarine, which then heads for Argentina.

6 Necochea, Argentina: after more than 90 days at sea, Hitler and Braun land on the Argentinian coast on 28th July, 1945. From there, the couple flies to a remote German-owned ranch, Estancia San Ramón, on the outskirts of the city of San Carlos de Bariloche. The couple spend nine months at the ranch, before settling into their permanent residence, a grand cabin called Inalco, which is isolated at the foot of the Andes near the border with Chile. In February 1962, the 72-year-old Hitler dies from a blood clot.

shortly afterwards, the Russians withdrew the claim. Closer studies had revealed that the likeness was superficial. The fact that the deceased was wearing holey socks, in particular, had caused the agents and their team of specialists to change their mind about the man's identity. Then, on 4th May, 1945, the search seemed to be over: heavily charred remains of a man and a woman had been discovered in a bomb crater. Several of the experts insisted that they must be the remnants of Hitler and Braun, but an officer overruled them and the corpses were covered over once more. Doubts lingered, however. As a result, on the following day, on 5th May, 1945, the negligible remains of the couple were dug up again, and a Soviet Commission of Inquiry began an investigation into the identity of the deceased pair.

It was no easy task: the corpses were beyond any normal form of recognition and the experts realised that they would need to use forensic evidence. A fragment of jawbone, some loose teeth and two dental bridges were placed in a jewellery box, then the agents secretly contacted Hitler's dental assistant: Käthe Heusermann. Meanwhile, the rest of the couple's remains were placed in wooden coffins and secretly buried on the orders of Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin – first in an anonymous grave in a forest west ▶

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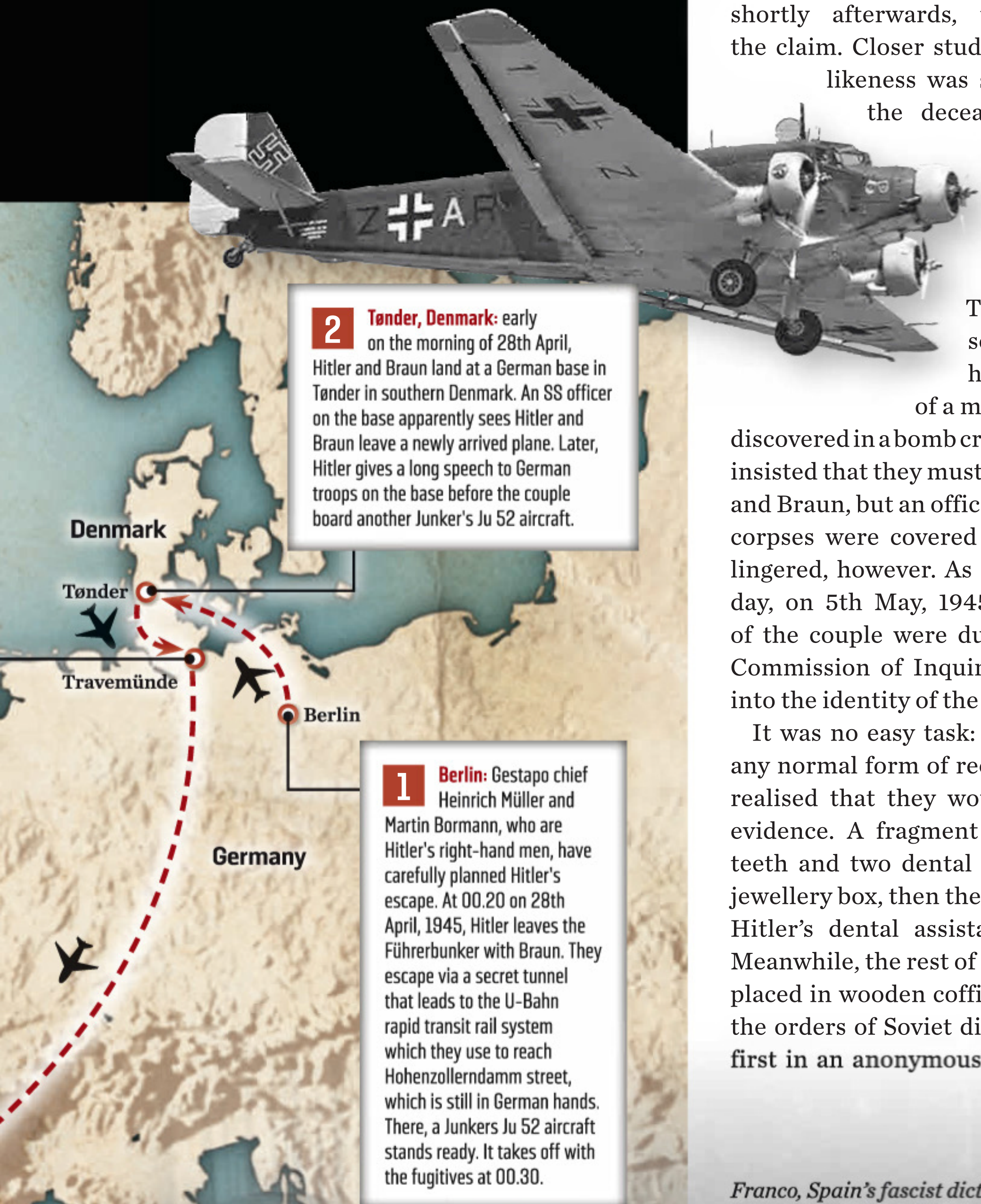


2 **Tønder, Denmark:** early on the morning of 28th April, Hitler and Braun land at a German base in Tønder in southern Denmark. An SS officer on the base apparently sees Hitler and Braun leave a newly arrived plane. Later, Hitler gives a long speech to German troops on the base before the couple board another Junker's Ju 52 aircraft.

1 **Berlin:** Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller and Martin Bormann, who are Hitler's right-hand men, have carefully planned Hitler's escape. At 00.20 on 28th April, 1945, Hitler leaves the Führerbunker with Braun. They escape via a secret tunnel that leads to the U-Bahn rapid transit rail system which they use to reach Hohenzollerndamm street, which is still in German hands. There, a Junkers Ju 52 aircraft stands ready. It takes off with the fugitives at 00.30.

Franco, Spain's fascist dictator was close friends with Hitler, whom he had met several times.

How were Hitler's last remains studied?

The task of examining the remains of Hitler's charred bones was hampered by the fact that the Führer's loyal followers poured petrol on his corpse before setting it on fire. Nevertheless, researchers have been able to analyse parts of the charred remains found outside the Führerbunker.

EVIDENCE 1: Ash

The charred bones are gone

When members of the Russian intelligence service first found Hitler and Braun, it seemed impossible to identify them. The bodies had burned for several hours, and there were just charred remains and ashes left. In the 1940s, the ash could not be analysed for meaningful data and was therefore discarded; if it had been stored forensic practitioners today could have performed a detailed DNA examination of any bone fragments that had not been entirely consumed by the flames.

CONCLUSION:

After the makeshift cremation at the Führerbunker, Hitler's remains were dug up three times and finally destroyed by Russian KGB officer Vladimir Gumenyuk in 1970. The ashes were then scattered in secret, so scientists never had the opportunity to examine the bone fragments.

Modern crematoria destroy all DNA

1 In modern crematoriums, corpses are burned at 1,000 degrees Celsius for more than 70 minutes. The heat breaks down the cells, and since DNA is found inside the cells, the DNA strands also degrade. Afterwards, the remaining tissue is pulverised to dust consisting of calcium phosphate and some single minerals. Studies show that it is virtually impossible to determine the identity of a modern cremated body.

Hitler's ashes and bones could have talked

2 Hitler's remains presumably consisted primarily of ash, but would also have contained a number of larger, charred bone fragments. Even the degraded and quite limited amount of DNA from the pieces could have been propagated with a process called polymerase chain reaction, which would have supplied enough genetic material to draw a DNA profile.

Hitler's relatives should help

3 The more damaged the DNA, the more difficult it is to draw a DNA profile, but the methods are becoming more refined. If the person's DNA is not already on file, the profile can be compared to DNA from other family members. In Hitler's case, this could have been a possible solution for identification.

One of the last photos taken of Hitler outside the Führerbunker on 20th March, 1945.

EVIDENCE 2: skull and jaw fragments

Skull does not give a definitive answer

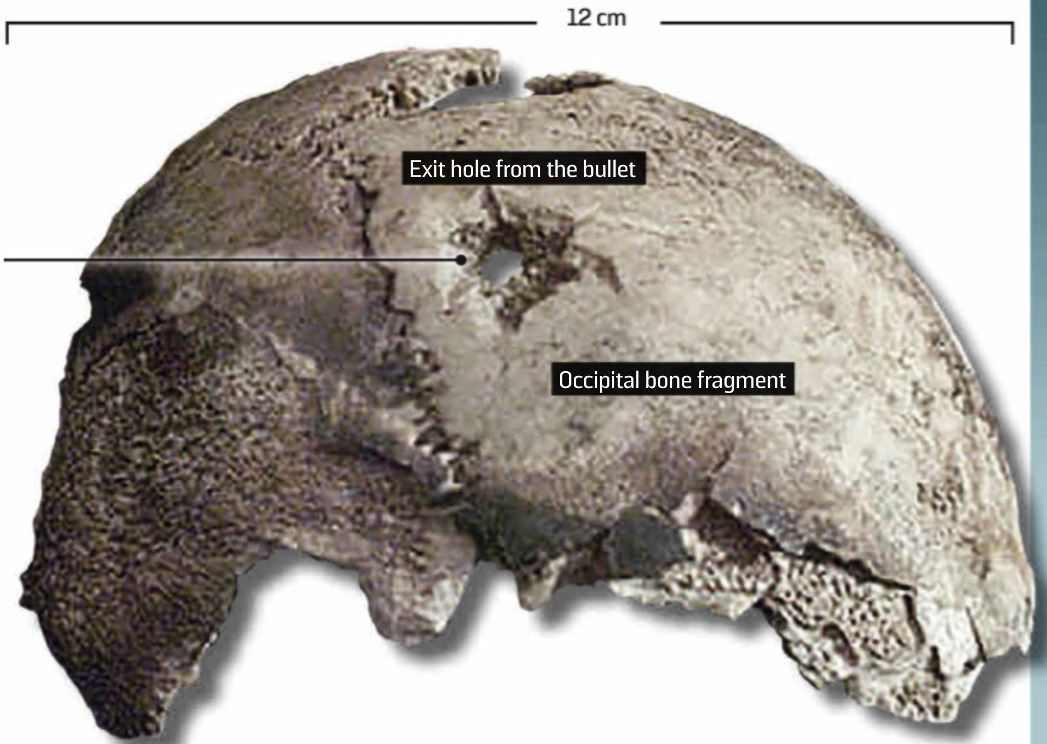
Before disposing of Hitler's ashes in 1970, the Russians kept a piece of jawbone and a part of the cranium that had been pierced by what appeared to be a bullet hole. The fragments have since been stored in the Russian state archives in Moscow and periodically analysed. The piece of skull, which was stored with the rest of the Führer's remains, was found in May 1946 – almost a year after the ashes were discovered outside the Führerbunker. The cranial piece is quite well-preserved, but is surrounded by mystery, because the researchers who have examined the fragment cannot reliably deny that the skull belongs to Hitler. The case is even more complicated because the Russian intelligence service claimed that Hitler only took cyanide rather than shooting himself, while Joseph Stalin denied he had died at all.

CONCLUSION:

In 2017, French scientists compared X-rays taken of Hitler's skull in September 1944 after an unsuccessful assassination attempt with the fragment in storage. They concluded that without DNA analysis of the bone, there was insufficient evidence to claim that the perforated parietal bone had belonged to Adolf Hitler.

Hole in skull looks like a bullet hole

1 The approximately 12 cm-long cranial section, which Russian authorities claim is Hitler's, comes from the back of the head. In the middle of the rear part of the left parietal bone sits a 6-mm-wide hole with a frayed edge. By using forensic principles to analyse the star-shaped hole, scientists have determined that it is an exit point from a bullet that struck while the person was still alive.



This skull fragment, which may have belonged to Hitler, is today in storage in the Russian state archives in Moscow.

Scanning evaluates collections

2 By studying the fragment with an electron microscope, scientists were able to create a detailed map of the skull's surface, which enabled them to analyse the joints between the skull parts, which move during a person's life. In this case, the skull was believed to be from someone with a stage 3 profile. That is, someone with a similar age to Hitler when he died.

The scientists' assessment was that the skull belonged to a person between 45 and 75 years of age when they died.

EVIDENCE 3: Teeth

Teeth are identified as Hitler's

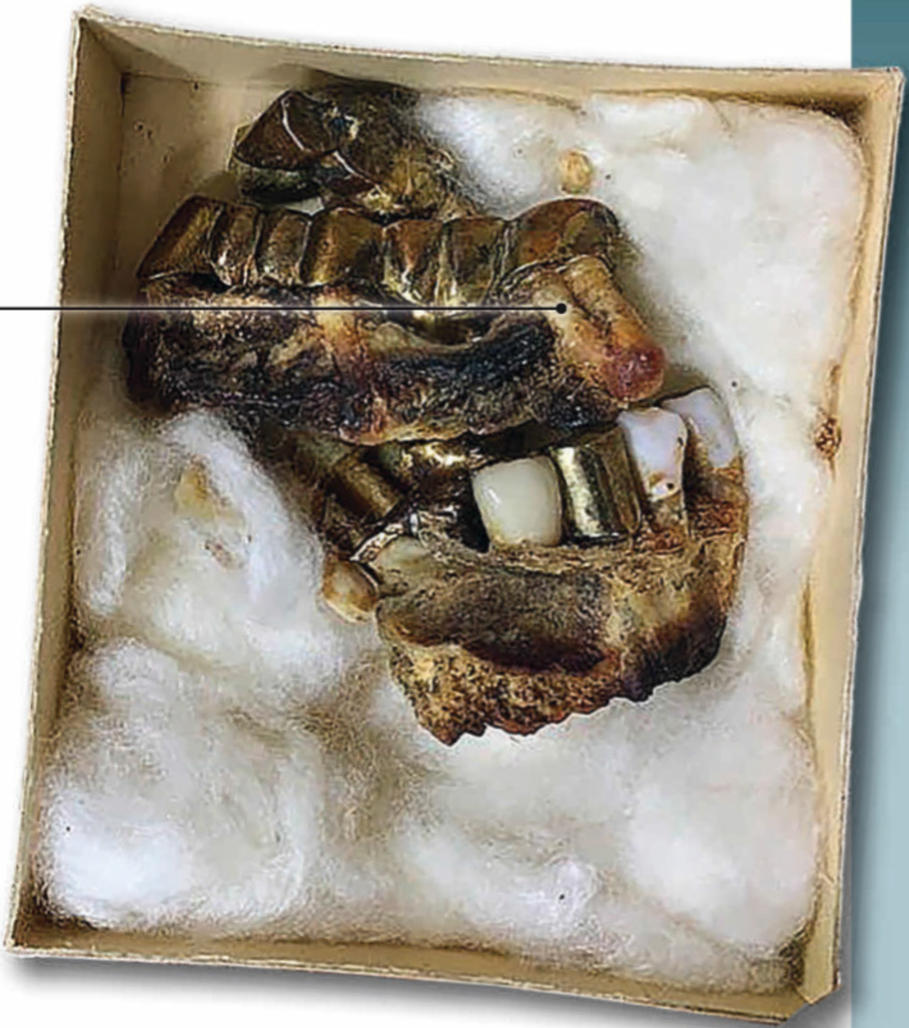
A dental set can reveal a great deal. Often, modern remains can only be identified thanks to X-rays and dental records. In the Russian state archives lies a rotting set of teeth embedded in a jawbone. According to the Russian authorities, the teeth were found in a grave in Berlin and, at the autopsy, helped identify the owner as Adolf Hitler. For example, Hitler's dental assistant could describe the extensive patchwork of bridges, fillings, and false teeth that filled the dictator's mouth. Although the Nazi leader had only just turned 56 at the time of his death, he only had four natural teeth left.

CONCLUSION:

According to a new French study there is no doubt: the rotten teeth belonged to Adolf Hitler. The researchers reached this verdict by analysing the dental set and comparing it with X-ray images and dental records. At the same time, the study found traces of a bluish coating that may indicate cyanide residues.

The enamel survived the fire

1 Teeth are made from enamel, which consists primarily of calcium salts and is the hardest tissue in the body. Long after the body's other tissues have decayed or been burned away, the teeth remain, as was the case with Hitler's preserved dental set.

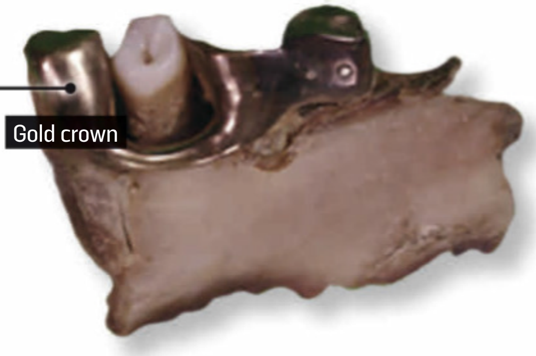


The growth rate is stable

2 As teeth grow, they follow a semi-standardised growth curve that allows experts to determine age. This enables forensic dentists to evaluate the wear of teeth to assess how many years they have been in use. Hitler's teeth have clear signs of wear and tear.

Teeth are personal

3 Forensic dentists only need a few teeth to identify an individual if there are existing X-rays of the dental set. Even without these, scientists can prove who the person behind the teeth was, if their relatives can identify missing teeth and crowns or can detail diseases that may have affected the teeth. In some cases ethnic origins can also be determined from teeth. For example, shovel-shaped incisors are apparently more common among those with Asian or Native American ancestry. In Hitler's case, the remains of his teeth could be compared to dental records and even testimonies given by dental staff about Hitler's many bridges, crowns, dentures and diagnoses.



of Berlin, and later at a Soviet military barracks near Magdeburg.

Heusermann examined the two dental bridges carefully and identified one as Führer's: "These are the teeth of Adolf Hitler", she declared without hesitation. Käthe Heusermann herself had been responsible for treating the Führer's notoriously bad teeth, and she also recognised the other dental bridge as Braun's. In addition, she and a few colleagues willingly helped to obtain the deceased patients' records, complete with dental cards and X-rays.

Finally, no doubt remained that the dental work came from the Führer and Braun. The Soviets sent the evidence to Moscow convinced that they have discovered the bodies of Hitler and his new wife.

The Führer was spotted everywhere

Joseph Stalin followed the Commission of Inquiry's investigation closely and at the end of May 1945 took over the case personally. He intended to keep the whole world guessing about what had become of the Nazi dictator, believing that no one needed to know for sure that Hitler had died. Allegedly, he threatened his staff with the death penalty if they let the truth escape and revealed that Hitler's remains had been found. According to TASS, the official news and image agency of the Soviet Union, the reports of Hitler's death were a "fascist trick to cover Hitler's disappearance from the scene".

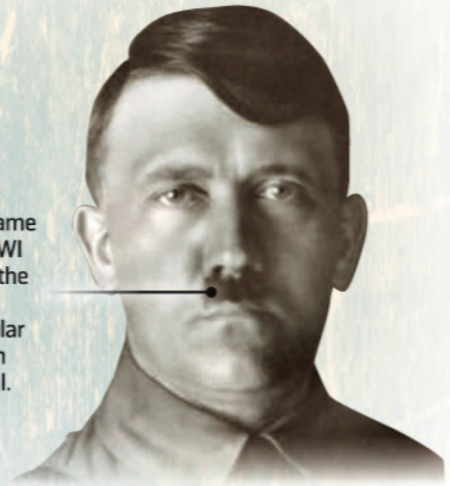
> It has also been established that a large submarine left Hamburg before the arrival of the British forces.
>
> 1945 Soviet Declaration

Why Stalin insisted on fabricating a web of lies is still a mystery – but historians believe that the dictator wanted to maintain a level of uncertainty about Hitler's fate for propaganda reasons. For example, such a deception would enable him to later accuse Western leaders of keeping Hitler hidden.

Although the news of Hitler's death was accepted throughout the world, Stalin spent the summer of 1945 planting seeds of uncertainty.

On several occasions, he publicly raised suggestions that Hitler had fled into hiding with other Nazis, offering a tangled mass of conflicting theories to support his speculations: Hitler had escaped to Japan in a submarine was one such claim. When asked in 1945 at the Potsdam Conference – a conference between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union – how Hitler had died, he replied, without blinking, that Hitler was obviously still alive and living "in Spain or Argentina".

Characteristics | Moustache



REBEL LOOK
The clipped moustache became popular after WWI as a reaction to the big moustache, which was popular with the German kaiser Wilhelm II.

An official Soviet Declaration in September 1945 helped to further muddy the waters by claiming that no trace of Hitler's or Braun's body had been found and that Hitler, through false testimony, had sought to cover his tracks. "Irrefutable proof exists that a small plane left the Tiergarten [in Berlin] at dawn on 30th April, flying in the direction of Hamburg. Three men and a woman are known to have been on board. It has also been established that a large submarine left Hamburg before the arrival of the British forces."

With this kind of double talk, Stalin created a fertile ground for conspiracy theories. And it didn't take long before sensationalists in the media began issuing reports that Hitler had materialised here, there and everywhere.

For example, eyewitnesses claimed to have seen the Führer disguised as a woman in the Irish capital, Dublin, as a croupier in a casino in a French holiday resort and as a recluse in a cave near Lake Garda in northern Italy. According to other newspaper stories, Hitler was working as a fisherman in the Baltic Sea and as a shepherd in the Swiss Alps. Others claimed that he was in Spain, hiding under the name of Adi Lupus in the presidential palace of the Fascist dictator, General Francisco Franco.

Hitler appeared in Argentina

In July 1945, US censors intercepted a letter sent to a Chicago newspaper. The mail intimated that Hitler was living in a German-owned hacienda approximately 800 kilometres from Buenos Aires. He spent his time there musing on

Berlin lay in ruins in April 1945. In the chaos that prevailed in the ruined city, a number of top Nazis managed to escape.

plans for long-range, robot-controlled missiles. Although the US Federal Police, the FBI, took the intelligence seriously and conducted investigations through the US Embassy in Argentina, the trail led to a dead end.

But time again and again, alleged eyewitness reports appeared claiming that Hitler and Braun had been spotted in Argentina. In view of the fact that a large number of top Nazis – including Nazi physician Josef Mengele and Adolf Eichmann, the main organisers of the Holocaust – were proved to have escaped to South America after the war, the claims seem plausible to some.

One theory stated that Hitler and Braun had escaped the annihilation in Berlin aboard an aircraft. Circumstances quoted to support this theory included the facts that at the end of April 1945, Hitler ordered the Nazi's triumphal avenue in Berlin (today, Straße des 17. Juni) transformed into a temporary runway, and that several top Nazis, including the Minister of Armaments and War Production, Albert Speer, fled Berlin by air in the last days of the war.

Proponents of this theory believe that Hitler and Braun were also able to escape at the last minute – the couple taking off from one of the city's main streets in a plane where Captain Peter Erich Baumgart, a highly decorated Luftwaffe pilot, was at the controls. After the war, in December 1947, Baumgart testified during his war crimes trial that on 28th April, 1945, he flew Hitler and Braun to a German airbase in Tønder in Denmark – and that Hitler handed him a cheque for 20,000 Reichsmarks for his service.

After the interrogation, the pilot was sent for a psychiatric evaluation, but maintained his story, which was backed up by an SS officer, Friedrich von Argelotty-Mackensen, who has been stationed in Tønder at the time. He claimed during an American-led investigation in March 1948 to have seen Hitler and his new bride descend from a plane in Tønder and board on another whose destination he did not know. According to the authors of *Grey Wolf: The Escape of Adolf Hitler*, from Tønder the prominent couple flew to a Spanish air base near Barcelona, where the fascist dictator, Franco, had prepared a long-range aircraft for the next stage of their journey. This plane carried the pair to Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands, where Hitler and Braun boarded a German submarine and headed to South America.

The two charred bodies found in the grounds above the Führerbunker were, according to *Grey Wolf's* authors, the Nazi couple's lookalikes. The doppelgängers had arrived at the Führerbunker on 28th April, 1945 having been hired to play the roles of Hitler and Braun, but on 30th April, their roles came to an abrupt end as both were murdered by Müller who poisoned Braun's stand-in, before shooting Hitler's double. The bodies were then wrapped in blankets, carried into the Chancellery grounds and burned. Only Bormann and Müller were involved in the murders: the other occupants of the Führerbunker believed the dead couple to have been Hitler and Braun.

Commits suicide with a pistol

Testimony from the inner circle of Nazis, who had stayed in the Führerbunker with Hitler during the final days of the war, drew a very different picture – a picture that represents the official history of the events. On Monday, 30th April, 1945, while shells dropped on Berlin and defeat became inevitable, Hitler decided to commit suicide. The Führer called his closest friends in the bunker to say goodbye after making it clear to his personal adjutant, SS-SturmbannFührer Otto Günsche, that the earthly remains of himself and his new wife, Braun, must, under no circumstances, fall into enemy hands.

Hitler asked Günsche to take steps to ensure the pair remained "forever undiscovered".

Continued on page 25

The past found in Argentina

On 8th June, 2017, police in Argentina's capital of Buenos Aires made a striking discovery. During a raid on the premises of a private collector, officers discovered a secret vault packed with Third Reich artefacts – testimony to how many Nazis escaped to Argentina.

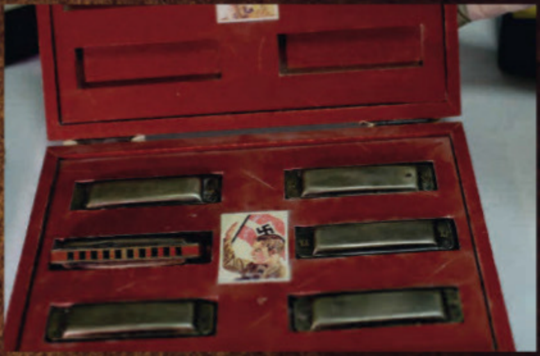
Hitler bust

A large metal bust of Hitler was one of over 75 objects discovered during the raid. According to experts, they were probably smuggled to South America in the wake of World War II by senior Nazi party officials. Thousands of war criminals are believed to have fled during this period to South America – mostly to Argentina and Brazil – to avoid prosecution.

This massive bust of Hitler was one of the rarer finds in the hidden hoard.

Toys

Puzzles, wooden building blocks, plus a box of harmonicas adorned with swastikas were among the items seized by police. Since the discovery, officers have undertaken extensive investigations to try to discover where the objects originated and how they ended up in Argentina.



Numerous Nazi artefacts were found in the suburb Béccar, north of Argentina's capital.

Eagle statue

A huge statue of the German eagle was hidden in the cache. There was also an instrument for measuring skulls –possibly used to classify people according to race – and a magnifying glass. It's possible that the latter belonged to Hitler – the vault also included photographic negatives that showed Hitler holding exactly the same kind of instrument.

The police have not yet discovered who brought the artefacts to Argentina.

INTERVIEW

Gert Normann Andersen, founder of Sea War Museum Jutland in Thyborøn in Denmark.

During a 2018 expedition, the museum found the wreck of the German *U-3523* at the bottom of the Skagerrak, between Denmark and Norway.

Who was aboard U-3523?

For decades, historians have been looking for the whereabouts of Nazi submarine *U-3523*, which disappeared without a trace in May 1945. Rumours claimed that the vessel was on its way to South America with leading Nazis aboard. Now, finally, the vessel has been found, but what can the wreck tell us?

How did you discover *U-3523* in April 2018?

The U-boat was found during our routine scans of the seabed from the research vessel *Vina*. In fact, we expected to find the German troop transport *Pionier*, which was sunk by a British U-boat in September 1940. Several fishermen had marked their own maps to show *Pionier* lying in this position. This transport was on its way from Frederikshavn in Denmark to Fredrikstad in Norway with 823 men and women aboard. Suddenly, it was hit by a violent explosion in the waters north of Skagen and soon began to sink. The shipwreck took 338 lives. But instead of *Pionier* we found the German U-boat – thanks to our multibeam scanner. A multibeam scanner is an expensive and sophisticated echo sounder that emits a broad acoustic fan-shaped pulse beneath the ship, providing a complete, almost photographic view of the seabed. With these scans we could immediately see that the wreck was a large U-boat, and from the drawings we could also recognise the type. The detailed scans undoubtedly showed a XXI type U-boat. The entire front end of the U-boat was buried, while the aft end rests 20 metres above the bottom.

How did you react when you discovered that it was the long-lost U-boat?

It was a special find – and even more interesting, when we later read the whole story of the U-boat. The *U-3523* was a large, ocean-going XXI type U-boat – the world's first true U-boat and, in every way, a revolutionary U-boat type. Before that, all U-boats had been surface vessels that could be submerged for short periods of time, but the type XXI had a snorkel and could stay under water for a long time.

According to British intelligence, the U-boat was sunk on 6th May, 1945, by a British B-24 Liberator aircraft dropping deep-water bombs. The day before, the German forces in Denmark, Northwest Germany and the Netherlands had surrendered, so the U-boat was not at war, but probably on the run. Do you have any thoughts about where the U-boat might have been going in order to escape?

Even after the German forces in Denmark, North-west Germany and the Netherlands had surrendered on 5th May, several German U-boats were travelling through Danish waters. *U-3523* was on its way to Horten in Norway, but that could well have been an intermediate destination on a longer route. South America could have been a possible destination – this U-boat was so advanced that it would have been able to sail submerged all the way to South America. We don't know whether there were any passengers or special valuables on board. No-one has been able to find that evidence so far, so we cannot answer that question for the moment.

U-3523 was launched on 14th December, 1944, and put into use just over a month later.

Sea War Museum has made film recordings of the wreck

with an underwater camera. What did the recordings show?

Visibility was limited when our underwater robot was filming. But we found out that much of the hull was covered in trawlers' nets. We could also see that both the tower hatch and the hatch in the stern were closed. The periscope and snorkel were extended, suggesting that the U-boat was sailing just below the surface when it was sunk. We could not detect any damage from the deep-water bombs that are believed to have hit the U-boat, which suggest that the vessel must have been hit in the bow. The closed hatches indicate that no-one was able to escape the U-boat after it was hit.

The U-boat is still on the seabed at a depth of 123 metres in the Skagerrak. What are the plans for the future? Should the wreck remain where it is, or should it be salvaged?

It is technically possible to recover the U-boat, but the operation would be so expensive that no authorities will pay for it. Neither the Danish nor the German authorities will allow others to recover the vessel. According to international law, all maritime wrecks belong to the state where the vessel was registered, which means that the U-boat belongs to the German state, even though it is in Danish waters.

There were probably up to 58 men aboard the submarine when it sank.

How have the descendants reacted to knowing the fate of their relatives?

The German type XXI U-boats were able to sail halfway around the globe. Only two were used during the war.

Dieter Rumpel, the son of one of the dead crew members, 26-year-old Friedrich Rumpel, has approached the museum. He and his family are incredibly happy that the U-boat has been found so that they can finally have closure. After the war, it took a long time before Dieter's mother and grandparents were told what had happened to Friedrich. His grandmother knew that the new U-boats had a very long range, and for a long time there were rumours that Nazis passengers had used the U-boats to sail to South America. The family clung to the rumours, hoping that Friedrich was still alive. Only in October 1947 did the family learn that *U-3523* had been lost.

What condition is the U-boat in? And how long can such a vessel lie in the salt water before it disappears or breaks up?

The U-boat is intact, but there are gaps in the outer hull of the tower. Our experience says that most of a U-boat's outer hull will corrode after around 100 years, whereas the internal pressure hull will last longer. After approximately 150 years, large parts of the hull will be completely gone. Only those parts that are buried in mud or sand – in oxygen-free layers – will be able to last for longer. We are currently part of a research project together with the National Museum in Denmark and Ulster University in Northern Ireland and this tells us that there appears to be a big difference between the Baltic and the North Sea. In the North Sea and the Skagerrak, wrecks disappear quite quickly, whereas ship hulls in the calm, low-oxygen freshwater in the Baltic Sea are preserved much longer. As long as a U-boat is closed, the interior will remain intact for a long time, but as soon as water enters the last organic material will quickly disappear. Shipworms will consume wood and bones, and bacteria will break down other material.

Hitler fled in an ultra-advanced submarine

For a long time rumours persisted that Hitler fled Germany in a U-boat. However, the U-boat in which Hitler supposedly escaped was found lying 123 metres under water in the Skagerrak in April 2018.

On 13th April, 2018, during a scan of Skagerrak's seabed ten miles north of the Danish town of Skagen, researchers from the Sea War Museum Jutland in Thyborøn, Denmark, made a remarkable discovery. While routinely mapping wrecks in the North Sea and Skagerrak, the team found the long-lost German submarine *U-3523* lying at a depth of 123 metres. Since the end of the war, the vessel had been at the centre of a controversial theory that claimed that Hitler and other top Nazis had used the advanced U-boat to escape to South America with a hoard of Nazi gold.

The image of *U-3523* that suddenly appeared on the research ship's screen was quite unusual: the bow of the 77-metre-long submarine was buried in the seabed, while the stern was sticking up 20 metres above the sand.

According to British intelligence, the submarine was sunk on 6th May, 1945 by a British B-24 Liberator aircraft dropping deep-water bombs. The day before, the German forces in Denmark, Northwest Germany and the Netherlands had surrendered, so the submarine was not at war, but probably on the run. *U-3523* was found approximately nine miles west of the position reported by the British bomber.

The submarine was one of Germany's new and extremely advanced type XXIs, which could have revolutionised submarine warfare during World War II if enough vessels had been completed before the end of the conflict. The Germans had begun building 118 type XXI U-boats, but only two came into active service and neither participated in battle. The type XXI was the first submarine that could remain submerged for a long time, and the *U-3523* had such a long range that it could have sailed all the way to South America, non-stop. **The secret was its groundbreaking battery that ensured that the vessel could recharge its power cells while still under the surface.** Whether South America was the intended destination of the vessel's last voyage is unknown. No-one knows whether the submarine was carrying valuables or passengers above the normal crew complement of 58 men, all of whom are presumed to have died when the vessel sank.

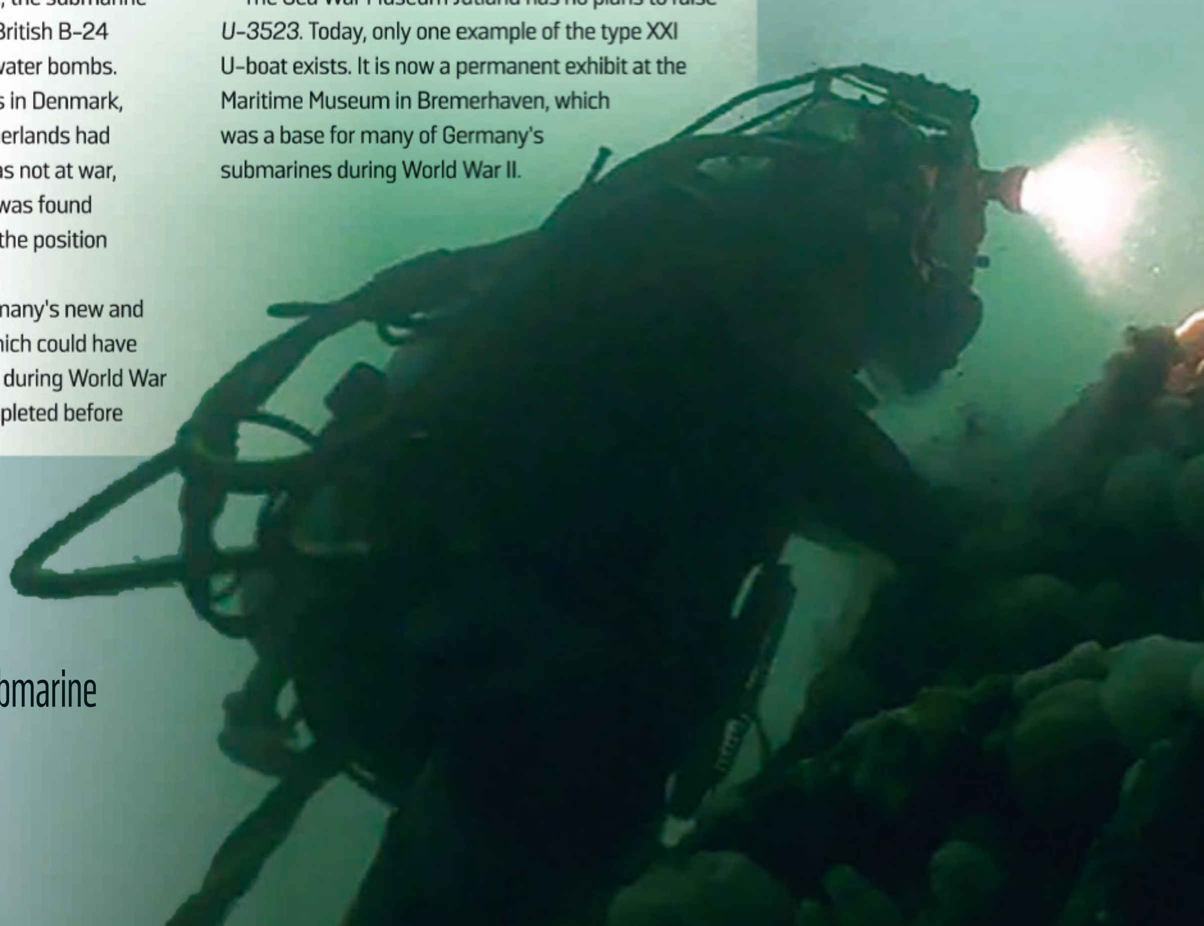
The Sea War Museum Jutland has no plans to raise *U-3523*. Today, only one example of the type XXI U-boat exists. It is now a permanent exhibit at the Maritime Museum in Bremerhaven, which was a base for many of Germany's submarines during World War II.

MYTH IN BRIEF

When Nazi Germany collapsed, Hitler, along with other top Nazis, fled aboard the submarine *U-3523*. The vessel was an ultramodern and extremely advanced type XXI, which could stay submerged for long periods and had such a long range that the submarine could sail to South America undetected.

Only two examples of the long-range U-boat were used during the war.

> The advanced type XXIs could have revolutionised submarine warfare during World War II.



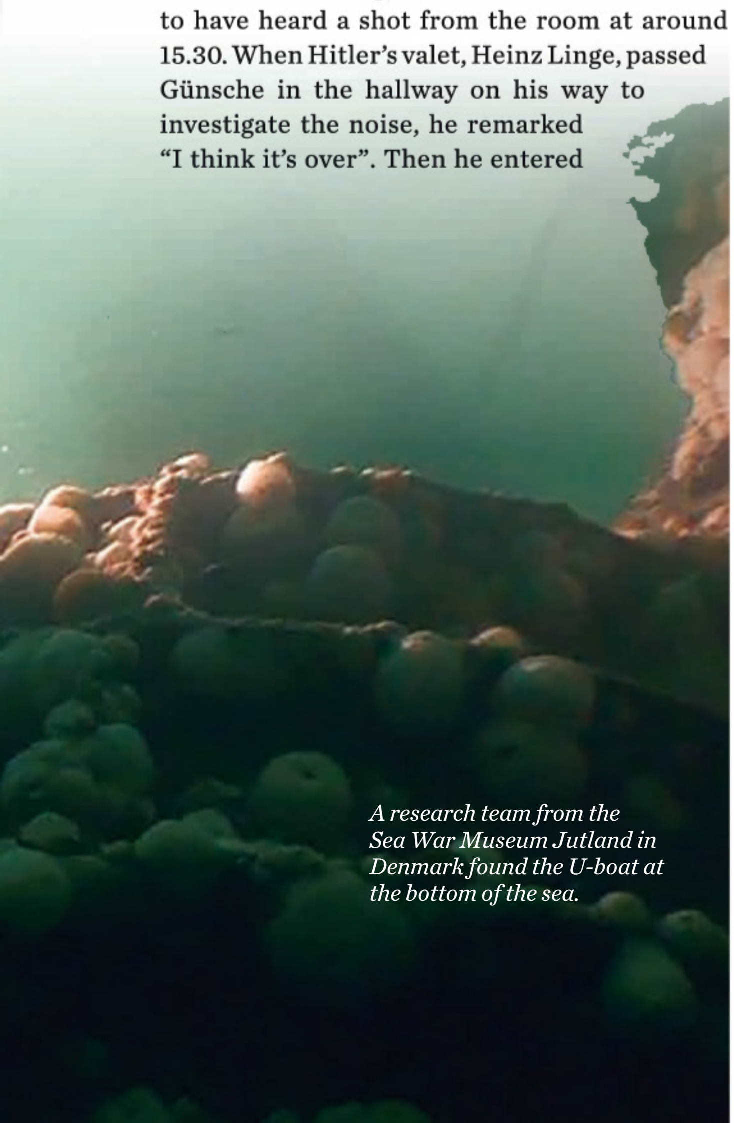
Günsche called Hitler's driver, Erich Kempka, who had an office in an underground garage at the Reich Chancellery, and asked him to get 200 litres of petrol immediately and bring it to the exit of the Führerbunker.

"Why would you need a mere 200 litres of petrol?" Kempka asked, but Günsche refused to answer, only telling the driver that it was urgent. Kempka ordered his staff – 60 drivers and mechanics – to siphon petrol from Hitler's fleet of cars before helping them to deliver the fuel to the bunker, which was in the middle of the battle zone.

Around noon on the same day, 30th April, Hitler took his last meal with a small entourage of secretaries and his personal dietician at a lunch that was characterised by gloomy silence. Once the group had finished eating, Hitler broke the silence: "The time has come; it's all over".

Then he said a final farewell to his trusted staff, including his right-hand man, Martin Bormann, and propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. Wearing his uniform jacket and black trousers, he walked with his wife, solemnly through the ranks of his faithful supporters, he then muttered a few words, after which he and Braun retired to his study.

Several of those present in the bunker claimed to have heard a shot from the room at around 15.30. When Hitler's valet, Heinz Linge, passed Günsche in the hallway on his way to investigate the noise, he remarked "I think it's over". Then he entered the study's antechamber and was met with the smell of gunpowder as if a shot had been fired.



A research team from the Sea War Museum Jutland in Denmark found the U-boat at the bottom of the sea.

Blood trickles from Hitler's forehead

Inside Hitler's private quarters, Linge, Bormann, Goebbels and several others were greeted by a horrifying sight: Hitler with his eyes open and head bent forward was sitting on the sofa. Blood trickled down his face from a bullet wound in his right temple and puddled on the rug next to his Walther 7.65 mm pistol. On his left, Braun sat lifeless in a blue dress, with her legs drawn up under her. The smell of bitter almonds hung in the air, and on the floor near the dead woman lay the source of the smell: a shiny brass container that had held the phial of deadly cyanide she had used to poison herself.

Working quickly, Linge wrapped Hitler's body in a blanket and carried it, with the help of Goebbels and Kempka, up the stairs to the Reich Chancellery's garden. Otto Günsche followed, carrying Braun's body, which was also wrapped in a blanket. In the grounds, the men put the two bodies next to one another in a crater a few metres from the bunker's entrance – none of the men dared venture further because of the constant enemy shells exploding around them.

> "The last remains of Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun were never shown publicly.

The Third Reich's last supporters poured petrol over the dead bodies and set them alight, then lifted their arms in the Nazi salute as black smoke swirled up from the blazing corpses and the bodies shrank to charred, unidentifiable remains.

In the days following the fall of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Commission of Inquiry publicly presented the bodies of Joseph Goebbels and his spouse, Magda, who killed their children on 1st May, 1945, before committing suicide themselves in the Führerbunker. The remains of Hitler and Braun, on the other hand, were never shown. The fact that Hitler's body seemed to have vanished without a trace, combined with Stalin's repeated claims that the Führer had escaped, fed theories that Hitler was still alive. From all corners of the world, tip-offs and eyewitness accounts claimed that the Führer had been seen, even after the British intelligence officer and historian Hugh Trevor-Roper conducted an extensive investigation that proved that Hitler was dead. In 1945, the Brit was tasked with investigating Soviet allegations that Hitler was still alive; his report, submitted the following year, concluded unequivocally that the Führer and Braun died

Characteristics | **Side parting**

PROPAGANDA
Hitler worked purposefully to create an easily recognisable look, including the sharply marked side parting.

by suicide. But as the historian himself observed, “The desire to invent legends and fairy tales… is [greater] than the love of truth”.

FBI received handwritten letter

From 1945 to 1947, the US intelligence agency, the FBI, received hundreds of reports of Hitler sightings and tip-offs about where he was hiding. One witness believed he recognised him in Manhattan in New York, another that Hitler was in the state of Maryland, where the witness allegedly shared a table with him at a restaurant in 1946.

One of the more striking investigations featured a handwritten letter, allegedly sent by none other than Hitler himself. Writing in German, the resurrected dictator claimed that he “could not help smiling” when he was told “that my body and that of my wife Eva Braun had been covered with naphtha and burned in the Chancellery garden… for at this time we were many kilometres southwest of Berlin on our air journey to Argentina”.

Having analysed the letter, the FBI believed it was the work of a someone with psychopathic traits and the case was dropped.

In 1952, General Dwight D Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied forces during World War II, helped to cast further doubt about Hitler’s end.

“We have been unable to unearth one bit of tangible evidence of Hitler’s death. Many people believe he fled from Berlin”, Eisenhower said in 1952. Another supposed eyewitness was the former SS agent **Philip Citroen**, who in 1954 contacted the US central intelligence service, the CIA, claiming that Hitler was living in the Colombian town of Tunja, located approximately 140 kilometres north-east of the capital, Bogotá. The former Nazi leader was now posing as one Adolf Schuttlemayer, but, according to Citroen, among a crowd of exiled Germans in the town, he was still called Der Führer. Citroen told CIA agents that he had visited Tunja in connection with his work for a railway company where he had been introduced to the man he believed to be Hitler. According to Citroen, all the Germans in the German enclave treated this alleged Hitler with utmost reverence. They called him Führer and greeted him with Nazi salutes.

PHILIP CITROEN claimed to have met Hitler in the Colombian town of Tunja, located approximately 140 kilometres northeast of the capital, Bogotá.

The CIA agents stationed in Colombia refused to take Citroen seriously. But when the rumours reached the ears of the CIA chief in Caracas, in neighbouring Venezuela, he quickly briefed his superiors in the US on the remarkable news of the Nazi leader’s possible presence in South America.

To give further weight to his words, he forwarded a photograph of Adolf Schuttlemayer posing with Philip Citroen. The man in the picture bore a striking resemblance to Hitler, but failed to convince CIA bosses that the case was worth pursuing. The ‘Hitler in Colombia’ case was closed.

Decayed remains were destroyed

With the exception of the dental and bone evidence, the supposed remains of Hitler’s and Braun’s body were destroyed forever in 1970 on the orders of Yuri Andropov, head of the Soviet state’s security service. In the spring of that year, the KGB boss issued a directive to dig up the charred remnants in the grounds of the Reich Chancellery from their unmarked grave in the barracks at Magdeburg. The military site was due to be handed over to the East German army, and the Russians feared that the East Germans might find the bone fragments.

After consulting with the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Andropov launched an operation on the night of 4th-5th April, 1970 to exhume and destroy any final remains. The unit dug up 10 or 11 bodies, which were then burned and crushed. Then the ashes were thrown into the Ehle river.

All that remains of Hitler now is his dental bridge and a fragment of his skull. After having gained access to examine these remains, a French team of forensic scientists stated in May 2018 that the dental pieces definitely belonged to Hitler.

“The teeth are authentic, there is no possible doubt”, said research leader Philippe Charlier, giving proof that Hitler died in 1945”. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

The corpse has disappeared forever

- **Stalin contributed to the confusion** about Hitler's final whereabouts when he claimed that Hitler wasn't dead. Why he said it, nobody knows.
- Hitler had at least one, and probably more, **lookalike stand-ins that could have been murdered** instead of the Führer.
- Hitler's **last remains today have disappeared forever**. Only a piece of his skull and his teeth and jawbone remain behind closed doors in Moscow.

6

Children were killed in the Führerbunker on 1st May, 1945. They were Joseph and Magda Goebbels children, aged between 4 and 12 years. They were given morphine on their parents' orders and then received a lethal dose of poison.

WHAT WE STILL **DON'T KNOW**

Could Hitler have fled to South America in a submarine?

1

In principle, yes. Until the last days of the war, airplanes could still take off from the main roads in Berlin and could have carried Hitler to a waiting submarine. In fact, two German U-boats, the *U-530* and the *U-977*, did manage to escape to South America. When Berlin fell in May 1945, their crews refused to surrender. Instead, the submarines set off for Argentina, where they arrived around two and three months later, respectively.

According to an Argentine journalist who claimed to have read police reports, two people had been put ashore by the *U-530* somewhere on the Argentinian coast – a German officer and a civilian. The submarine crew then surrendered to the Argentine fleet in Mar del Plata on 10th July, 1945. Who the pair were – or if the episode took place at all – has never been made clear, but the report caused speculation that it could have been Hitler and Braun.

On 17th August, 1945, *U-977* also arrived at Mar del Plata, where the crew surrendered to the Argentine authorities.

Was Hitler's skull found?

2

On Stalin's orders, in May 1946, a Soviet Commission of Inquiry scoured the bomb crater where the supposed earthly remains of Hitler and Eva Braun had been found the previous year. Agents found a cranial fragment **about 10cm by 12 cm with a bullet hole** – the Soviet authorities subsequently ruled that the skull fragment came from Hitler. Today, a number of researchers claim that it is impossible to verify the Soviet's findings.

Theoretically, Hitler could have escaped to Argentina and lived in hiding for a number of years.

In the space of a few years, Heinrich Himmler built a cult that paid ostentatious tribute to Aryan origins.

HIMMLER'S OCCULT WORLD

Since World War II, rumours have spread about SS leader Heinrich Himmler's obsession with the occult. Himmler was preoccupied with the idea of creating an SS cult and ordered the Reich's scientists to the most remote corners of the world in search of the Aryans and the origin of the German people.

Dressed in parkas and sporting long beards the five Nazis looked nothing like typical clean-shaven SS officers in their stiff black uniforms. But the officers were also removed from the Black Order's usual operations: the men had been tasked with solving a mystery for SS-Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler.

Led by zoologist and SS-Untersturmführer Ernst Schäfer, with a long caravan of yaks and ponies laden with equipment trailing behind them, the Germans moved cautiously up a steep and winding path on the way toward a high mountain pass.

The 28-year-old scientist was a famous and seasoned explorer. He had participated in expeditions to Tibet on two previous occasions. But this time, his focus was not on animals: Schäfer and his team had a much more important task: Himmler was convinced that the Aryan race – the Germans – had their origins in Tibet. At the end of April 1938, therefore, the SS commander dispatched Schäfer and his four companions from Germany on a scientific expedition to the immense Himalayan mountains to prove his theory.

Since 1929, several German scientists had explored central Asia and Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region, and one of them had claimed to have found a surprising number of people with blonde hair and blue eyes – in Himmler's eyes, they could only be talking about people of his own blood. Himmler also believed that the ancient Hindu scripture *Rigveda* – over 3,000 years old – contained clear references to an ancient sun god from Europe, and so considered the writing to be an important document regarding Nordic origins and the race's early presence in Asia.

> Schäfer and his colleagues' task was to conduct racial and archaeological studies in Tibet's rugged terrain.

Schäfer and his colleagues' task was to conduct racial and archaeological studies in Tibet's rugged terrain, where they would have to fight through ice and snow to accomplish their mission. Himmler hoped and expected in 1939 that Schäfer and his companions would return to the Third Reich with evidence that the Aryan race had been widespread throughout the region in ancient times. This tangible proof would reinforce Himmler's claim that the Aryans were an ancient people and had always been superior to any other race.

Aryans fled from Atlantis

It was no surprise that Himmler had ordered the expedition. According to rumour, the brutal SS leader believed completely in the Aryans' almost mythological origin and also of the existence of Atlantis. He had set up his castle at Wewelsburg as a temple, where he conducted dark rituals, dreamed of the Holy Grail and was impressed by ancient runes. Himmler's search for the occult was set in motion as early as 1935 when he'd established *Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage) – a special investigation unit tasked with researching Aryan roots and history. The institution's goal was "to promote the science of ancient intellectual history" under the motto: "A people live happily in the present and the future, so long as they are conscious of their past and the greatness of their ancestors."

The idea was that the researchers – a prudent mix of scientists and scholars – would override traditional science and instead create a new image of the world, one where a tall, blonde-haired super race of modern Germans was descended from an ancient intelligent Aryan race that was superior to all other racial groups. Since the 19th century, there was widespread belief among German intellectuals that the Aryans had their origins in Tibet. Here, in the Himalayas' hidden valleys, the Aryans lived peacefully in a distant past. But at some point the mountain idyll had been destroyed for unknown reasons, after which the tribe of tall, strong, blue-eyed people migrated across the world. Some went south and conquered the Indian subcontinent, others headed west, where they founded great empires until finally they reached Germany and Scandinavia's cold expanses.

> ” As a child, Himmler had listened intensely to his parents when they read aloud from books on German history or about German and Nordic myths

It may seem odd that a talented, cynical and calculating man like Himmler was preoccupied with what was likely to be a fairy tale.

But the SS-Reichsführer had been always been fascinated in his ancestry. As a child, Himmler had listened intensely to his parents when they read aloud from books on German history or about German and Nordic myths. He was especially captivated by the *Prose Edda* – a collection of two Medieval Icelandic literary works – with

The expedition leader Ernst Schäfer (fourth from the left) photographed in Tibet along with his team in 1938.

How the Nazis defined an Aryan

EYE COLOUR
The Nazis' ideology was based on the fact that people can be divided into different races. The Aryan or Germanic race was primarily Nordic and was considered to be superior to any other. One particular feature was the eyes that were blue, blue-grey or grey – and often bright and penetrating.

HEIGHT
According to the German eugenicist Hans FK Günther's definition from the 1920s, the Aryan race was slim and tall – its men had an average height of 1.74 metres. The ideal of a physically superior race was hailed in the film *Olympia*, which documented the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.

HAIR COLOUR
The word 'Aryan' comes from Sanskrit: 'arya', meaning 'noble', 'precious' or 'pure'. Another characteristic was the hair, which was light, smooth and silky. Although Adolf Hitler had dark hair, the Nazis used mainly blonde-haired men, women and children in their racial propaganda.

NARROW FACE
Günther wrote that the race had elongated heads, with a significant distance between the front and the back, and had a long, narrow face. Even the skin was defined – as fair or light-coloured. The Nazis planned to implement racial policies to improve and refine the German – or Aryan – race.

its colourful gods like Thor, Freja and Loki, so he never forgot them. Fostering his increasing interest in history, Himmler's father had set aside an entire room in the family's Munich home as a shrine to the memory of the family's ancestors. This so-called *Ahnenzimmer* (Ancestry room) filled up with heirlooms, pictures, Roman coins and an abundance of antiques. As Himmler grew up, his interest in history remained: the Nazi chief was obsessed with the past, and his all-consuming interest was the greatness of his German ancestors. He devoured historical novels and accounts of the bravery and heroism of his Aryan ancestors, the Germanic tribes.

Just like many other Nazis, he was convinced that pure Aryan blood had once flowed in the veins of ancient Germans, and he relied on Ahnenerbe's scientists to uncover the pearls of Aryan wisdom that must be out there somewhere for the benefit of the Third Reich.

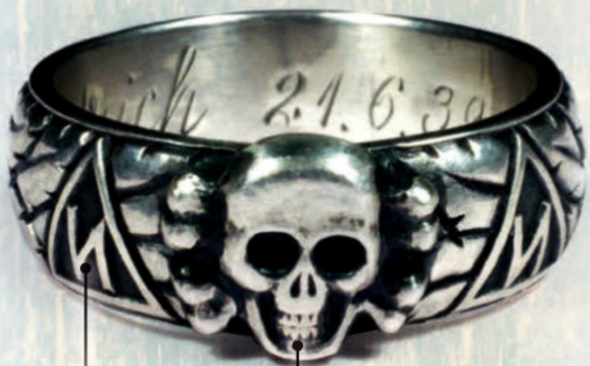
This theory wasn't unique to Himmler. Its foundations could be found in a book on the fabled Atlantis, published by Austrian engineer (and mystic) Hanns Hörbiger in 1912. Here his analysis of glaciers led him to the theory of *Welteislehre* (World Ice Teachings), which claimed ice was the basic substance of all life.

The theory was as strange as it sounded, but for the Nazis it held one crucial point: the ideas dismissed Jewish scientist Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and thus provided an antithesis to Judaism itself.

According to Hörbiger, Aryans had arrived from the skies in sperm, encased in the cosmic ice of meteors. From here, a kind of white superhuman – Aryans – emerged who then, among other developments, founded Atlantis. This, according to Hörbiger, was located near Thule in Greenland. Even Christ was considered to be a direct descendant of the Atlanteans who, after the fall of Atlantis, fled through the Gobi Desert to the Himalayan valleys. 850,000 years ago, his argument went, before the flood and escape to the Roof of the World, these superhumans had

Symbolism | SS Honour ring

SPECIAL GIFT The death's head ring was Himmler's personal gift to those selected for his SS corps.



RUNES Four runes are engraved in the ring. The rune symbol to the left of the skull symbolises the power of the sun.

DEATH'S HEAD The symbol indicates that the wearer of the ring does not fear death, but embraces it.

built an extremely advanced civilisation with both planes and electricity.

In contrast to the white Aryan super race stood the “subhuman” blacks, Jews and Mongols, all of whom were in an eternal conflict with the almighty white race. The bizarre theory was readily accepted by both Hitler and Himmler. The SS-Reichsführer was so convinced that he tried to enforce this theory onto schools and universities instead of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution.

This belief was the reason why five supposedly Atlantean descendants found themselves in the Himalayas many thousands of years later looking for traces of their ancestors from a golden age.

Wearing a pith helmet with SS runes, the Germans travelled across the border into Tibet, where only a few Europeans could gain entry. Then the unheard of happened: the expedition was given permission from the Tibetan regent to visit the capital, Lhasa, where few foreigners and no Germans had ever set foot before.

The natives were measured

Among Schäfer’s research group was anthropologist Bruno Beger, who was the epitome of the Nazi Aryan ideal with his 185-cm tall athletic body, blonde hair and blue eyes. The expedition’s racial expert was set to the task of looking for fossil remains from early Aryans while also logging and comparing similarities between the Aryan race and the Tibetan locals. Beger took his task very seriously: whenever he encountered a research subject in the guise of a native on the expedition’s way through the wild mountain terrain, he went into action. He cut off locks for hair samples, measured the distance between eyebrows – and even logged the curve on fingernails.

Skull shape was a reliable marker of the Aryan race, so he also took hundreds of facial measurements and made masks of local Tibetans showing their face shape and features in detail for later racial-anthropological determination.

Often, the research subjects were terrified when Beger started his work: first, he brushed their head with oil, then covered the entire face with a thick mass of plaster. The ‘victims’ then had to sit and wait for the mask to dry – with straws hanging from their nostrils so they could breathe.

Himmler received returning heroes

During the expedition, Beger photographed almost 2,000 natives, measured 376 people and took casts of 17. When the Tibetan expedition team landed in Germany on 4th August, 1939 on Himmler’s private plane, which had taken the men on the final leg of their journey from Vienna to Munich, a warm reception awaited them.

Himmler was ready on the runway to welcome his brave scientists who, on the same day, were flown to Berlin for a huge reception. Although Beger had to spend more time analysing his data, he informed Himmler that he believed that he had identified Nordic traits in the Tibetan upper classes. His records revealed that Tibetan nobility were often tall, with a narrow face and straight hair.

These conclusions were naturally welcomed by the SS leader, who could then enjoy an unconditional propaganda success: on 5th August, 1939, and in the following days, the German newspapers informed the population about the expedition under such excited headlines as the “SS Tibet Expedition” and “The first Germans in Lhasa”. This was precisely the kind of positive press that Hitler’s staff craved during these troubled times, as the Führer turned his gaze towards Poland where everyone could hear the drums of war starting to rumble.

However, when the Nazi scientists’ results were finalised, the conclusion didn’t substantiate the theory of an early Aryan presence on Tibet.

Himmler wanted to grow his cult in an old, triangular castle

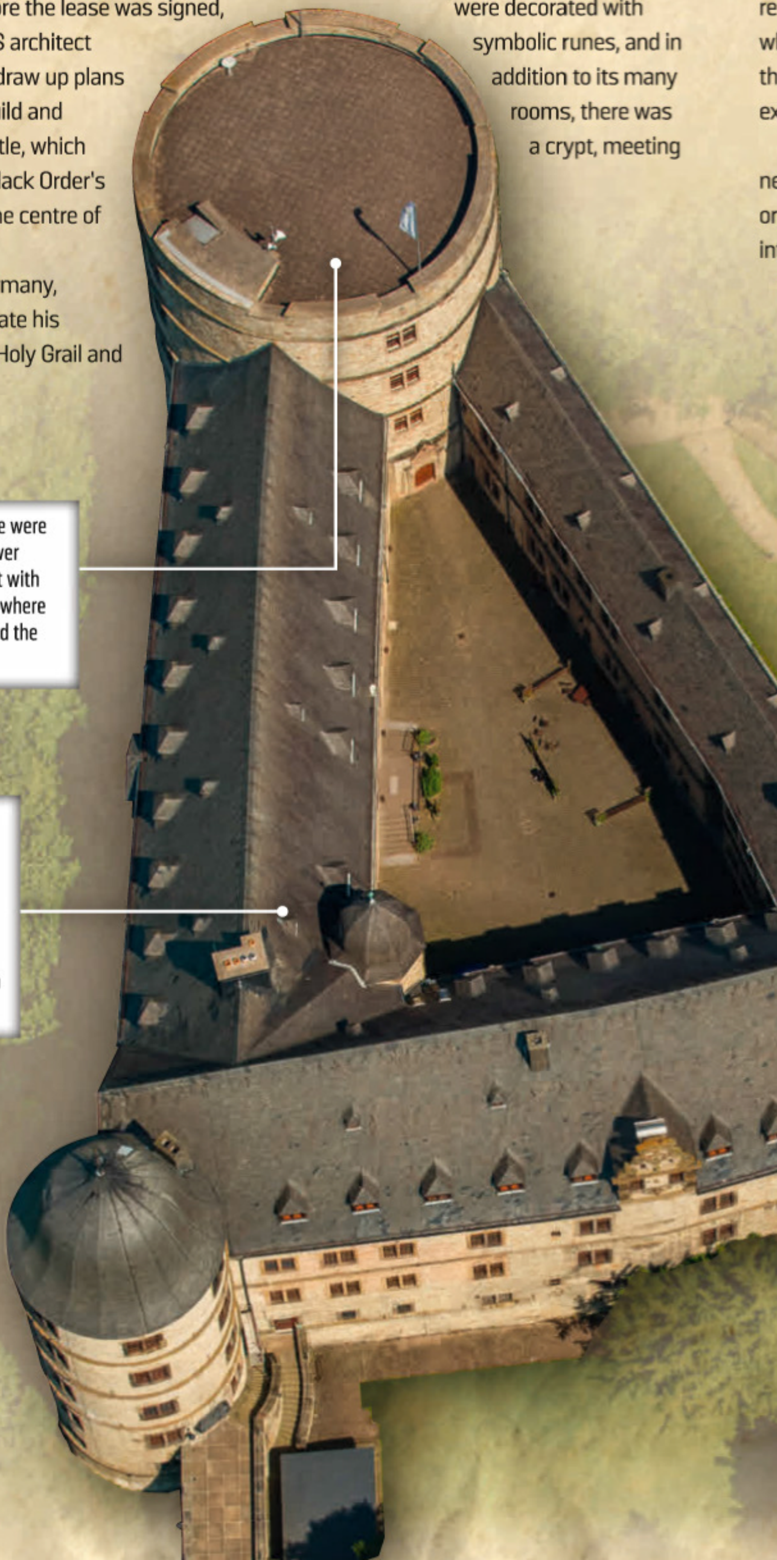
The Renaissance castle near the German city of Paderborn was designated as the heart of the SS cult and a spiritual gathering point for Himmler's specially selected men.

In 1934 Himmler leased Wewelsburg Castle at Paderborn from the local authorities for just one Reichsmark a year for a period of 100 years. Even before the lease was signed, Himmler had sent SS architect Hermann Bartels to draw up plans for an extensive rebuild and expansion of the castle, which would become the Black Order's religious heart and the centre of their universe.

Here in central Germany, Himmler could cultivate his fascination with the Holy Grail and Atlantis and the castle was carefully prepared for that purpose.

According to Himmler's wishes, the walls were decorated with symbolic runes, and in addition to its many rooms, there was a crypt, meeting rooms, a colonnade, a Grail room and a study for Himmler, plus a huge wine cellar with space for around 40,000 bottles. The castle's research library held up to 30,000 books, while the private museum housed a complete, three-metre-long fossil of an ichthyosaurus, an extinct fish.

However, the expansion of Wewelsburg was never completed. In March 1945, Himmler gave orders to blow up the castle so that it didn't fall into enemy hands.



In the north tower there were three chambers. The lower one incorporated a crypt with a dome-shaped ceiling, where a giant swastika adorned the centre of the dome.

The castle was triangular, and the triangular tip where the north tower stood faced north – which according to Himmler pointed towards the lost kingdom of Atlantis.

A giant crystal was installed in the Grail room to represent the Holy Grail. The crystal was placed on a base and lit from below by an electric light.

On the other hand, the data revealed that the Tibetans hadn't lived in isolation, but for many millennia had been in contact with many other peoples and were therefore a melting pot of many different ethnicities.

Himmler remained convinced by the Aryan theory and insisted that all human culture and all human scientific progress was the sole result of his proud Aryan heritage.

He considered himself to be a true German – some argue he even believed that he was the reincarnation of the first German king Henry the Fowler, who founded the medieval German state (previously known as East Francia) in 919. The SS called Himmler *"König Heinrich"* (King Henry), and Himmler regularly had conversations with the long-dead regent who, in his eyes, was both the political and human precursor to his great idol, Hitler.

> Himmler was ready on the runway to welcome his brave scientists who, on the same day, were flown to Berlin for a huge reception.

On 2nd July, 1936, on the 1,000th anniversary of his death, Himmler commemorated the first German king at a memorial ceremony in Quedlinburg in the east of the Harz, which was King Henry's first seat of power and capital of the East Francia kingdom. At Himmler's command, the town's church was stripped of all Christian paraphernalia in the run up to the memorial feast and was instead decorated with banners covered with SS runes and swastikas.

All this was part of Himmler's attempt to create a place of worship for the SS, a pagan Mecca where both members and ordinary citizens could flock to honour his German organisation. In 1937 his vision became one big step closer to being realised, as following several years of intensive searching, archaeologists found some skeletal remains near the church and close to the king's empty grave. Immediately, the bones were proclaimed to be King Henry's earthly remains. The bones were placed in a sarcophagus and reburied in the church's crypt in a ceremony on 2nd July, 1937.

The Black Order grew

After Himmler was appointed SS-Reichsführer in 1929, he'd successfully fought to create an organisation that was the pride and racial elite of the Nazi party. With Hitler's blessing he'd set special criteria for admission to the corps, which was also known as the Black Order. Since 1931, a special office within the *Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS* (Race and Settlement Office) had been given the task of evaluating the ancestry, abilities and character of the many candidates, and at the offices in Munich, assessors scrutinised the aspiring candidates' faces and physicality.

The appraisers were looking for traits that the Nazis regarded as Nordic: a long skull, a narrow face, thin lips, a tall and slim body, blue eyes and blonde hair. Only men who met these strict requirements and, moreover, could provide evidence of their Aryan heritage, became a part of Himmler's elite organisation.

The first ... SS | 1923

Hitler was given a bodyguard

At the beginning of 1923, a group of eight men swore they would defend Adolf Hitler, who was the leader of the German Nazi party, with their lives. The bodyguards called themselves *Stabswache* and each wore a black cap adorned with a silver skull – an insignia that would later become the SS's hallmark.

In May 1923, the bodyguard unit changed its name to *Stoßtrupp-Hitler* (Shock Troop-Hitler) and comprised around 100 members, all of whom were Hitler loyalists. In 1925 Hitler created a new corps of bodyguards, the so-called SS, an abbreviation for *Schutzstaffel* (Protection Squadron). Four years later, Himmler was appointed as the head of the SS. At that time, the elite organisation had around 280 men, but under Himmler the Corps grew rapidly and their role as Hitler's personal bodyguard ceased.

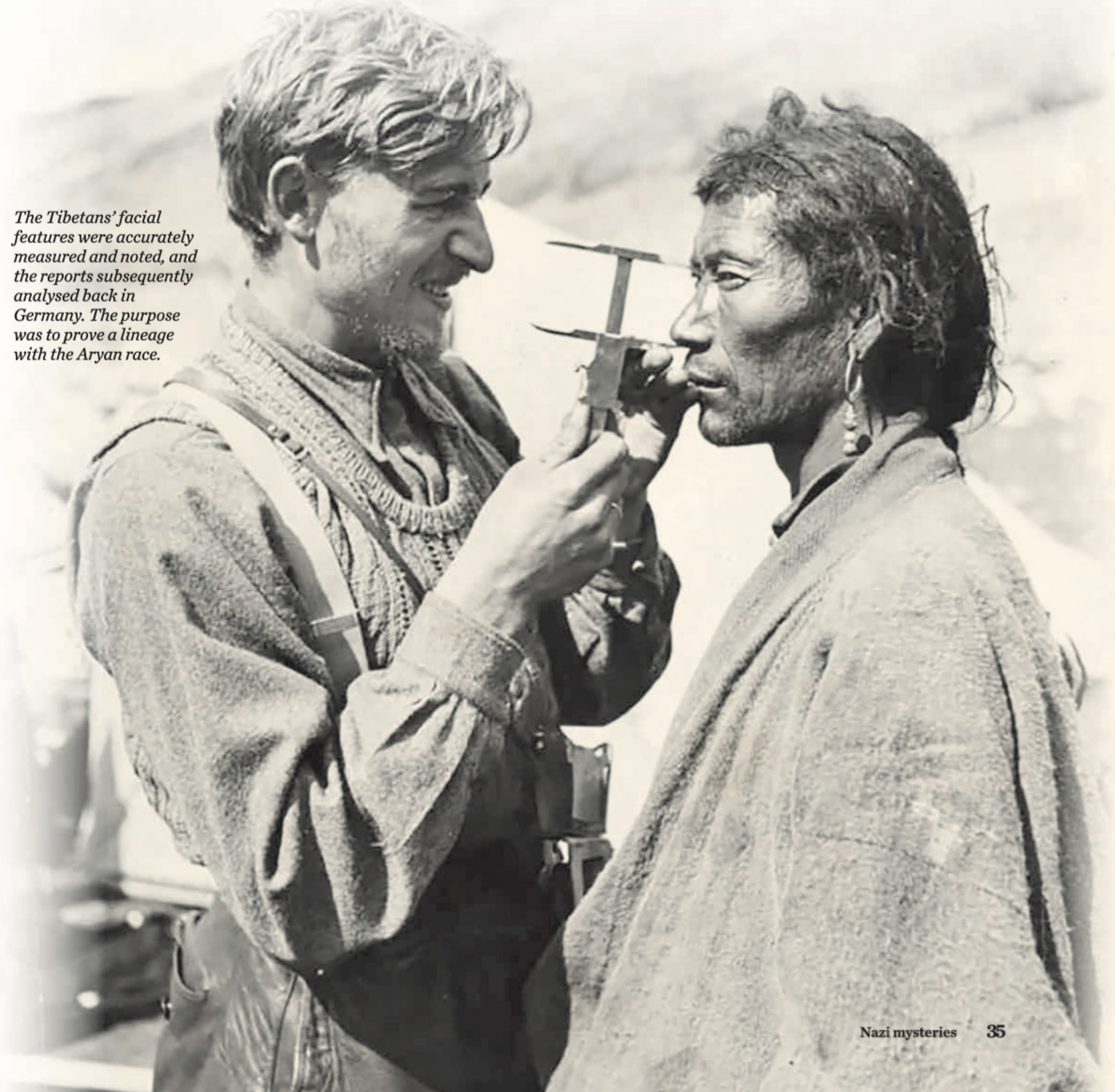
Adolf Hitler with SS bodyguards in 1925. From left Julius Schaub, Julius Schreck, Hans Maurer and Edmund Schneider.

Those selected could look forward to wearing a black uniform with silver stripes on the collar, designed by Hugo Boss, along with a cap sporting a silver skull. Himmler's vision was that one day the SS would be the root of a new, pureblood Nordic race.

Shortly after the Nazis seized power in 1933, the Reichsführer began putting plans together to establish a SS school, a secluded cult and meeting place for high-ranking SS members. Here, Himmler's racial elite would learn to think like the Aryans of old and be stimulated intellectually so that the new Aryan breed were suitably equipped to take their place in history. Himmler dreamed of a huge castle in a magical place for his school and found the perfect location in Westphalia near Paderborn. Here stood the 17th-century Wewelsburg Castle, in the middle of idyllic forests and small ravines.

In early November 1933, Himmler visited the castle for the first time and immediately fell in love with it. The building's thick walls rose imposingly over the hilly landscape, a perfect setting for the Black Order's stronghold.

But first and foremost, the SS leader noted the site's distinctive architecture: the layout was uniquely designed as a triangle, where one tip pointed to high north, the place where Himmler believed Atlantis to be located, and from where – according to legend – its population had fled to Tibet. Himmler immediately leased the castle from the local authorities and gave SS



The Tibetans' facial features were accurately measured and noted, and the reports subsequently analysed back in Germany. The purpose was to prove a lineage with the Aryan race.

> The building's thick walls rose imposingly over the hilly landscape, a perfect setting for the Black Order's stronghold.

architect Hermann Bartels the task of rebuilding and expanding the castle. Himmler's plans were constantly changing and became increasingly extravagant and ostentatious: a cult space would be created to worship the Nordic god Odin, and one of the rooms would be renovated and dedicated to the Holy Grail. The Reichsführer-SS's wish list grew constantly: a private museum, wine cellar, domed room with a gigantic swastika across the ceiling, a treasury where Himmler could store, among other things, the *Totenkopf* (death's head) rings from fallen SS men, a huge library, and a crypt devoted to Henry I. To realise his plans, Himmler established a concentration camp nearby in 1939, so he didn't run the risk of running out of manpower for his monumental building project.

Heinrich Himmler called his SS Corps the Black Order. The loyal men were part of a cult that became increasingly bizarre.

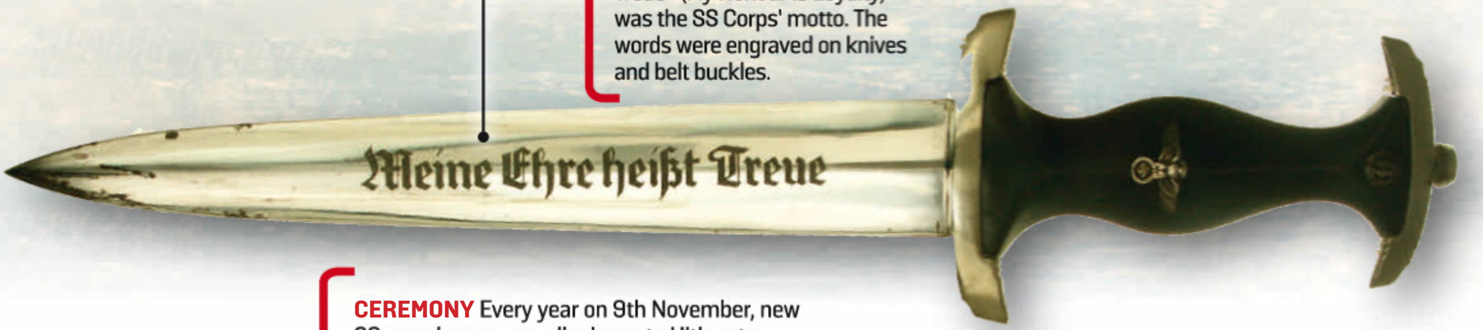
Researchers examined rock carvings

In order for Wewelsburg to become a success as an SS leadership and ideological training centre, the Reichsführer wanted further research done into the Aryans' lost history and religion to piece it all back together. According to Himmler, it would then possible for the SS to recreate the golden age of its Nordic past in its full glory, but this could only happen once his researchers had discovered more about the Aryan past.

From the research institute at Ahnenerbe's head office in Berlin, Himmler dispatched expeditions to all corners of the world to search for traces of the Aryans' glorious past. Typically, legends and myths were the driving force behind the numerous expeditions. Himmler was deeply fascinated by both, because he considered them to be much more than simple stories – he believed they contained Aryan wisdom.

In 1936, for example, he sent his scientists to Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland to find traces of early Aryans. In the Nordic countries, the researchers studied rock carvings such as prehistoric symbols and signs that were scratched into rocks and caves. The German scientists believed that the rock carvings were the world's oldest examples of the written word – a now-extinct Aryan written language that was the basis for cuneiform, hieroglyphs and

Symbolism | SS Honour dagger



MOTTO Motto "*Meine Ehre heißt Treue*" (My Honour is Loyalty) was the SS Corps' motto. The words were engraved on knives and belt buckles.

CEREMONY Every year on 9th November, new SS members swore allegiance to Hitler at a grand ceremony. Here the men received the 'SS Honour dagger', which was part of the uniform.

the alphabet. All they had to do was decode the symbols, a task that the scientists, under the leadership of Dutch professor Herman Wirth, struggled in vain to complete.

One of Wirth's grand ideas was that the Nordic race developed in Thule in Greenland, which had once been a "verdant, unspoiled paradise". In the eyes of the Dutchman, Thule was synonymous with the lost Atlantis. But even though Wirth investigated the world's geological and archaeological sites, he couldn't find any evidence of an early Nordic civilisation. Wirth's ideas were rejected and ridiculed by the German archaeological establishment, he was criticised by the Führer and Himmler was far from satisfied with his progress. As time went on, he lost faith in the professor who had helped found Ahnenerbe, but who was a gullible man who constantly exceeded his budget and failed to deliver.

> He [Himmler] was drawn to the tales of Thor and his hammer, Mjölnir, which was described as the most powerful and accurate weapon in the world.

When Wirth returned to Berlin after his Scandinavian expedition he was given the cold shoulder and Himmler was forced to admit that if Wirth had not had the protection of the SS he would undoubtedly have ended up in a prison or labour camp. As a direct consequence of Hitler's stinging criticism, in 1937, Himmler stripped Wirth of his role as director of Ahnenerbe and forbade him to publish books or to give lectures in its name.

Thor's hammer must be resurrected

Ahnenerbe's inability to provide any scientific breakthroughs didn't put Himmler off, however. He remained hungry for anything and everything that was shrouded in mysticism and the occult. In particular, he was fascinated by the Icelandic *Edda*, which he regarded as one of the richest sources of Aryan intellectual history. He was drawn to the tales of Thor and his hammer, Mjölnir, which was described as the most powerful and accurate weapon in the world. Seen through Himmler's eyes, the hammer was undoubtedly a prehistoric electric weapon akin to a light sabre, developed by Aryans of course.

Himmler's hope was that the scientists in Ahnenerbe could create a similar weapon for German soldiers so they could crush the enemies of the Third Reich. In a letter to them he asked:

"Research where in all of North-Germanic Aryan culture the concept of the lightning flash, the thunderbolt, Thor's hammer, or the hammer thrown or flying through the air appears. Also, where there are sculptures of a god holding an axe and appearing in a flash of lightning."

He was convinced that it was "not natural lightning and thunder, but rather a case of an earlier, highly developed weapon our forefathers had possessed".

In Himmler's opinion, the future of the SS depended on an in-depth understanding of the past, including the studies of legends and myths, so he had a good feeling when he met medieval researcher and archaeologist Otto Rahn, who had dedicated his life to finding the Holy Grail.

According to medieval writings, the Holy Grail is the cup that Christ drank from at the Last Supper, and which was later used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch his blood at the crucifixion.

In the 12th century, the hunt began for the relic, which had become a symbol of supreme insight. According to Rahn, the legend of the Grail had Aryan origins, and he claimed that anyone

Chemical ink analysis identifies age

When scientists investigate the authenticity of a diary, part of their examination includes looking at the ink, which is subjected to chromatographic analysis.

In a Russian military archive in the town of Podolsk south of Moscow in 2013, historians found Himmler's diaries, which were seized by the Red Army in 1945. The diaries cover the years 1937-1938 and 1944-1945, and contain an incomprehensible mix of family pleasantries and mass murder – for example, a telephone conversation with his daughter Gudrun in the morning, his presence at the mass murder of Jewish women and children in the afternoon and dinner with SS officers in the evening.

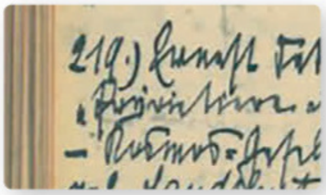
Unlike Hitler's diaries, which were published by the German newspaper *Bild* in 1983, Himmler's diaries were considered genuine. The books were largely authenticated by their ink. With a special technique called chromatography, scientists analysed the colour composition of the ink and, with quite high precision, determined whether the ink was made in the 1930s and 1940s. The diary's paper, handwriting and covers were also subjected to vigorous investigations, and the conclusion was unambiguous: the diaries belonged to Heinrich Himmler.

Scientists focus on three things:

The cover

1 By analysing the cover material, scientists can determine when a book was produced. Artificial leather with a content of polyester, for example, first appeared on the market in 1953.

Handwriting

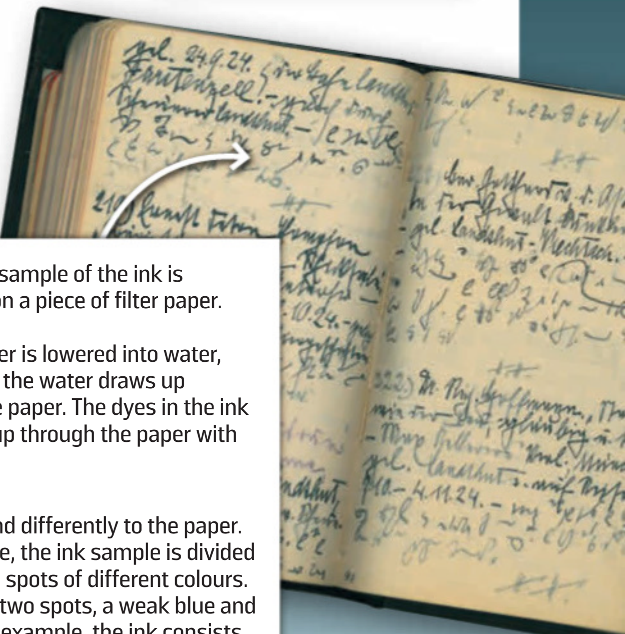


2 By comparing the diary records with, for example, validated letters written by the person in question, experts can determine whether the manuscript is genuine.

The paper and ink

3 Chemical analysis reveals the paper's make-up and thus whether the material contains substances that do not match the date. For example, a fabric such as 'optical white' was not used before 1955.

Himmler kept a diary throughout his time as SS leader.

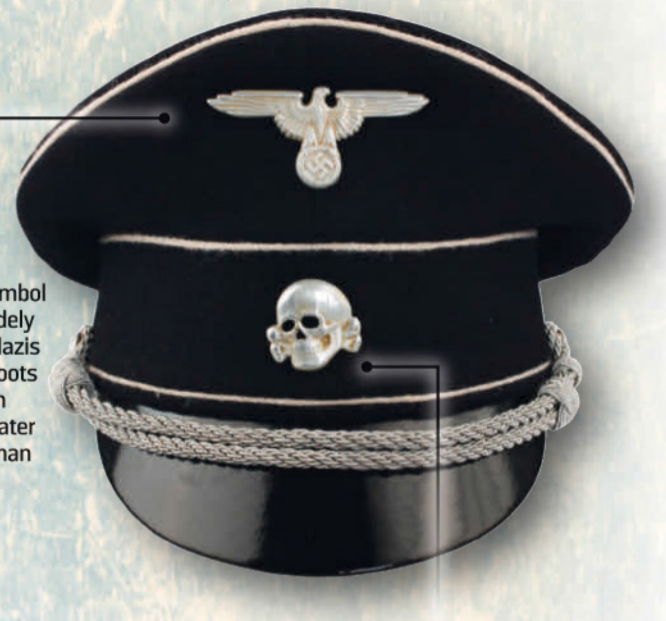


A A small sample of the ink is deposited on a piece of filter paper.

B The paper is lowered into water, after which the water draws up through the paper. The dyes in the ink are drawn up through the paper with the water.

C Dyes bind differently to the paper. After a while, the ink sample is divided into several spots of different colours. If there are two spots, a weak blue and a violet, for example, the ink consists of at least two different dyes. The dyes are then assessed and compared with dyes that existed in 1945.

Symbolism | Headwear



EAGLE The Eagle symbol was used widely among the Nazis and had its roots in the Roman Empire and later the Holy Roman Empire.

SKULL The skull and crossbones adorned the front of an SS soldier's cap. The symbol also appeared on Prussian uniforms from the mid-18th century onwards.

who caught sight of it would gain eternal life. Generations of researchers and hopeful amateur treasure hunters had dreamed of the Grail and hunted everywhere for the elusive prize. But Rahn believed he knew exactly where the Grail was hidden: in the ruins of Montségur Castle, located on an inaccessible mountain peak in the French Languedoc region.

The castle was the last bastion of the Cathars, a Christian sect, and was where they allegedly guarded their most precious treasure. In 1244, a thousand-strong army of Catholic bishops and royal forces stormed the castle and burned the Cathars on the stake. According to legend, a small group of Cathar monks fled through secret passages with the Grail.

Book about Grail was bestseller

Otto Rahn was convinced that the Holy Grail was still hidden somewhere in the ruins of the Montségur Castle, and in 1931 he led an expedition to the site, but it was in vain. In 1933, he wrote a book *Crusade Against the Grail*, and this particular work aroused Heinrich Himmler's attention.

The SS sent a telegram in 1933 offering Rahn 1,000 Reichsmark to write a second book about the search for the Grail – and as part of the agreement sent Rahn on what was probably the most thankless task a researcher could be exposed to: finding the fabled treasure.

Rahn, who was an openly gay liberal with no anti-Semetic views, joined the SS and donned the order's black uniform. Again he travelled to France and even to Italy and Iceland in search of the Grail, but returned home empty-handed. In 1937, in order to buy himself some time, he published another book, in which he documented his crusade. The work was filled with pseudoscientific claims and mystic references, yet Himmler loved the book and ordered 5,000 copies, bound in the finest leather, which he gave to the Nazi top brass, including Hitler.

When Rahn read the printed book, he discovered to his discomfort that an anti-Semitic section had been added, which he – who himself had Jewish ancestry – had no knowledge of.

Shortly after the book was published, Rahn was assigned to a three-month posting as a guard at the concentration camp in Dachau, because he has been caught in the act of sex with another man. His experiences in the camp shocked and frightened him and, ashamed of the true nature of the Nazi regime, he wrote to a friend: "I have much sorrow in my country, impossible for a tolerant, liberal man like me to live in a nation that my native country has become."

Deeply upset, he resigned from the SS in 1939, and although Himmler had no intention of letting him go so easily. The SS was not an organisation that you could simply walk away from. When Rahn learned that Himmler's henchmen were breathing down his neck, he climbed a snow-capped mountain peak in Tyrol, Austria, where on 13th March, 1939 – unsurprisingly – he was found dead, having frozen to death aged just 35 years old.

Himmler had put so much confidence in Rahn finding the Grail that he'd dedicated a whole room to it in his Castle in Wewelsburg. But during the course of 1939, events occurred that overtook Himmler's disappointment of not having the Grail.

In September, Germany invaded Poland, war broke out, and the SS-Reichsführer became busier than ever before as he organised the extermination of the Jews, and would soon enter history as the architect of the Holocaust, the Nazi genocide of six million Jews during World War II. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

Himmler was hunting Aryan origins.

- Himmler believed that the **Holy Grail existed** and was hidden in France.
- The Reichsführer sent expeditions in **search of Aryan origins.**
- Wewelsburg Castle was leased by the SS and set up as a centre for a cult, where they could cultivate Nordic mythology.
- **Members of the SS cult** believed that Atlantis was more than a myth – a real place that had existed thousands of years ago.

5,000

members were in Himmler's 'Black Guard' – the earliest SS members who enjoyed special privileges and were recipients of the special death's head ring.

WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

Did Otto Rahn commit suicide?

1 Otto Rahn, who hunted the Holy Grail unsuccessfully, fell out of favour with Himmler and was soon found dead on a mountainside in the Austrian Tyrol. Officially Rahn committed suicide, but a large number of historians doubt that was the case; instead, they believe that Rahn was murdered.

Did Himmler believe in Atlantis?

3 It's impossible to conclude whether Himmler really believed in the myth of Atlantis or whether he was simply intent on strengthening the belief of the Aryan race as superhuman. Specifically, he sent expeditions in search of Aryan origins, including Atlantis. We know that Himmler wanted to create a new religion, worshipping both the Sun and old Nordic gods. Nevertheless, the whole staging of Aryan worship could easily be part of a wider plan to secure the Nazis' legitimacy by creating a cult and convincing the Germans of the superiority of their race.

Where did Himmler's belief in the occult come from?

2 Historians still have doubts about why Himmler cultivated the occult. We know that from childhood Himmler was preoccupied with old legends and especially the Nordic race's mythology, which created the foundation for his strong conviction. In addition, it's very likely that he also saw the possibilities of using the stories to build a strong and loyal cult around him.

Atlantis was first mentioned in the works of Greek philosopher Plato Critias *and* Timaeus.

Since World War II, rumours have flourished about a Nazi gold train that disappeared loaded with a vast amount of treasure.

HUNT FOR THE GOLD TRAIN

In 1944, a train rolls out from a station in Budapest bound for the Alps. Its carriages carry huge amounts of gold and diamonds stolen from the Hungarian Jews who were sent to the extermination camps. Neither the train nor its valuable content ever reach their destination.

In mid- December 1944, a freight train left the station in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. The locomotive sent up a cloud of black smoke and its diesel engines buzzed loudly as it gradually picked up speed on its way out of the city, pulling 42 heavily laden wagons behind it. Its departure had not drawn much attention, as there was plenty of rail traffic in German-occupied Hungary where the transport of troops and equipment competed with passenger and freight trains for space on the tracks. The wagons' contents, on the other hand, were highly unusual.

The carriages hid an unimaginably precious cargo; kilos of gold, jewellery, precious stones, oriental carpets, rare stamps, furniture and banknotes of all kinds filled boxes and bags stacked up on the wooden floor of the locked carriages. The objects were Nazi plunder, stolen from the Jewish population in Hungary, and the train's destination was supposed to be somewhere in the Alps, where the valuables could be safely hidden from the rapidly advancing Soviet armies from the east.

> ❞ Huge amounts of gold and diamonds and up to 200 works of art are still missing from the train.

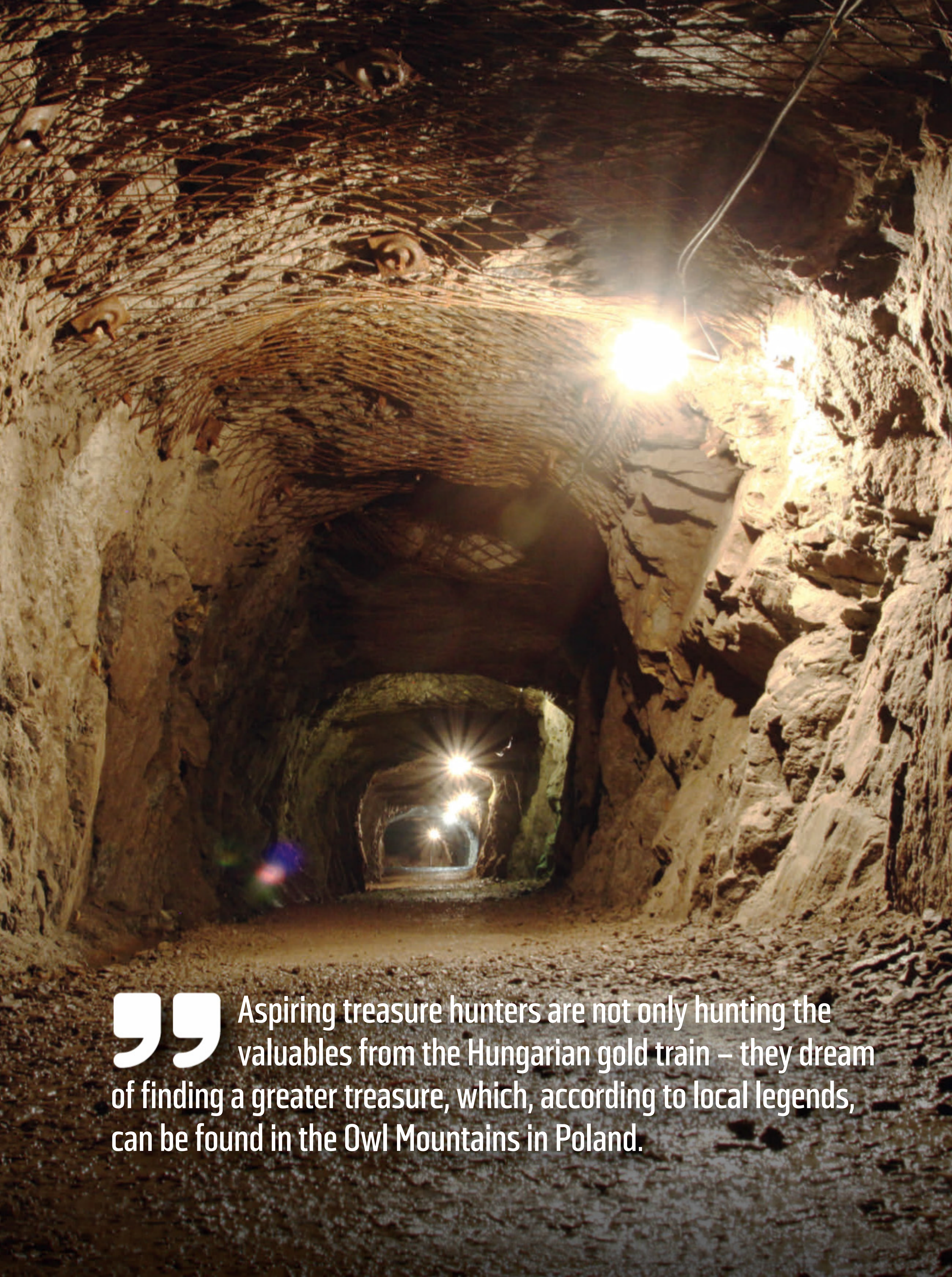
But neither the train nor its valuable cargo ever reached its objective. Six months later, in May 1945, the train was stopped by Allied troops in the Austrian town of Werfen. Although they found both gold and art aboard the train, the soldiers quickly concluded that huge amounts of gold and diamonds and up to 200 works of art were missing. No one knew where the treasure was. Even now, almost 75 years after the end of World War II, the valuables still haven't been located.

The only man who could reveal their fate, Hungarian official **Árpád Toldi**, is no longer alive. Nevertheless, today historians have identified part of the gold train's fate with the help of testimony from interrogations immediately after WW II.

ÁRPÁD TOLDI was the Hungarian official responsible for bringing the gold train to safety.

Jewish gold ended up on the train

It was not unusual for the gold train to roll out of the station in Budapest in 1944. The Nazis' extermination of Europe's Jews peaked in the latter part of the war, and the persecution of Hungary's Jewish minority increased immediately after Germany's invasion in March 1944. Hungary had already been under the control of a fascist government that passed laws severely curtailing Jewish freedoms. The regime also wholeheartedly supported the Nazis, who began systematically eradicating the country's Jews immediately after the invasion. Under the leadership of *Obersturmbannführer* (Senior Assault Unit Leader) Adolf Eichmann, the Germans



> Aspiring treasure hunters are not only hunting the valuables from the Hungarian gold train – they dream of finding a greater treasure, which, according to local legends, can be found in the Owl Mountains in Poland.

deported around 600,000 Hungarian Jews, most of them to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp in Poland.

Before the Jews were sent to their deaths, Hungarian authorities demanded they give up all their valuables. The handover took place under a pretext of peace, order and legality. Officials packed the items carefully – everything from Persian and oriental rugs to dining room tables, diamond necklaces and wedding rings – in boxes and bags with envelopes carrying the owner's name and address. Each owner then received a receipt for the filed items with assurances that they could be collected when the owner returned from what was termed a 'temporary deportation'. In December 1944 the valuables, together with other stolen items, were loaded onto the train that departed from Budapest's Central Station and rolled out on the track heading west. We will return to the fate of the Hungarian train later, because aspiring treasure hunters are not only hunting the valuables from the Hungarian gold train – they dream of finding a greater treasure, which, according to local legends, can be found in **the Owl Mountains** in Poland.

Gold from the holocaust victims' wedding rings and teeth ended up aboard the gold trains.

THE OWL MOUNTAINS are a mountain range in the Sudetes in south-western Poland.

Poland's gold train has not been found

Although current sources only mention the Hungarian Gold Train, the Germans probably dispatched other gold trains too. There's a growing interest in Poland, where Jews were demonstrably robbed of all their valuables. According to legend, these immense riches were also loaded onto a train and transported deep into old mining shafts in the Owl Mountains in south-western Poland.

Whatever the vast facility's original purpose was, the Nazis never completed the project and when the Red Army started approaching at an alarming speed, the Germans blew up the facility to prevent it falling into enemy hands before they left the area. But treasure hunters believe the tunnels hide the Polish Jews' valuables.

The story of the train buried deep in the tunnels originates with elderly locals who had supposedly seen the 'gold train' run into the Owl Mountains never to be seen again. The suspicion that the mountains are harbouring a 'gold train' is supported by the fact that historians know that the Nazis seized nearby Ksiaz Castle, presumably to store the Jews' stolen loot. Over the years, treasure and fortune hunters have flocked to the mountains hoping to find the missing train.

Fresh expeditions began in August 2015 when rumours spread that a former Nazi had confessed on his deathbed about the train's existence while also revealing its location. Hundreds of treasure hunters descended on the area. Even more enthusiastic treasure hunters followed suit, after Poland's deputy culture minister Piotr Zuchowski stated optimistically that he was "90 percent sure" that the train was in the underground tunnels. Some of the survey teams brought ground-penetrating radars (GPR). By means of electromagnetic waves, GPRs can detect solid materials in the soil, providing researchers with an impression of any underground structures.

In September 2015, the radars revealed a new tunnel, and since then modern tools have mapped previously hidden passages in the labyrinthine interior of the mine. The treasure hunters are convinced that something great will come to light one day. Whether this happens is questionable, as more than three years of work have not yet revealed the slightest trace of the train – the existence of which still can't be confirmed.

Anti-Semitic secured Jewish gold

What is certain, however, is that the Hungarian gold train did exist. Historians don't know what the Germans intended to do with the train's precious cargo, but presumably the Nazis planned to sell the valuables once the war had ended.

SS-appointed Hungarian colonel Árpád Toldi was responsible for the transport. He held a high government position in Hungary's occupying administration, was known to be strongly anti-Semitic and had actively played a role in deporting Jews to concentration camps and confiscating their belongings.

Toldi, as Commissioner for Jewish Affairs, was put in charge of transporting the Nazi bounty into safe custody outside the country's

Continued on page 50

US soldiers with art rescued from Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany.

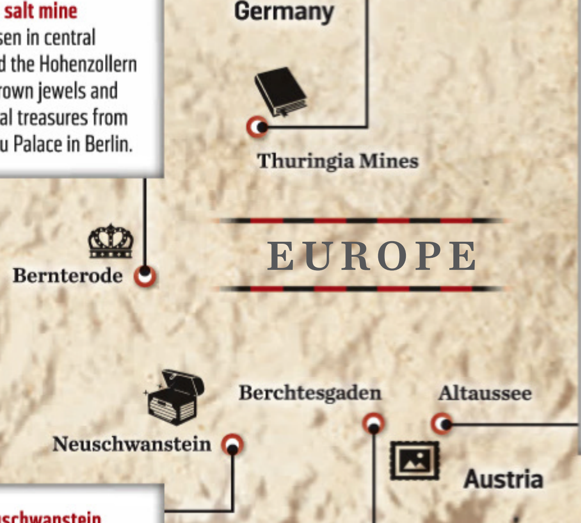
Art treasures were hidden in the Third Reich

999.9
GOLD
1 KILO
1 KILO

In addition to gold and jewellery, the Nazis stole about five million pieces of art, not just from Jews, but also museums and universities, as well as churches and other religious institutions. The treasures were stored in deep mines and in castles throughout Germany and Austria.

Mines hid paintings, sculptures and a large collection of books and manuscripts from Germany's leading libraries.

Bernterode salt mine at Nordhausen in central Germany hid the Hohenzollern dynasty's crown jewels and other cultural treasures from the Monbijou Palace in Berlin.



Altaussee salt mine in Austria, with more than 56 km of underground tunnels, contained around 6,000 works of art, including Michelangelo's masterpiece 'Madonna of Bruges' and Hubert and Jan van Eyck's spectacular 'Ghent Altarpiece'.

Neuschwanstein Castle in southern Germany hid a large collection of works of art, jewellery and furniture. The majority was stolen from French Jews including the Rothschild banking family. The castle also held an archive cataloguing 8,000 pictures and 21,903 stolen objects.

Hitler's 'Eagle's Nest' in Berchtesgaden
In the bunker and corridors at Hitler's summer home in Bavaria, the Nazis had requisitioned more than 1,000 paintings and sculptures. The objects were Hermann Göring's private plunder and included such wonderful works by the famous painter Rubens.

From **1943** to **1951**

SPECIAL UNIT HUNTED LOST ART

In 1943, a special group is given the task of finding and saving the art treasures stolen by the Nazis. The men become known as The Monuments Men.

June 1943
US President Franklin D Roosevelt founds the organisation that becomes The Monuments Men.

July 1944 The Monuments Men help save cultural treasures in Camposanto, a historic monument in Pisa, Italy, during an Allied bombing of the city.

August 1944 The group helps plan the operation to liberate Florence. The art hunters brief Allied air forces on the location of the most important art treasures, so the pilots can avoid bombing them.

May 1945
In the Ransbach salt mine near Merkers in central Germany, The Monuments Men find over two million books, manuscripts and maps from the former Prussian state library in Berlin. The mines also store note books, costumes from Berlin's state opera and a truck-load of paintings from the state museum in Berlin.

May 1945
The Monuments Men find the Hohenzollern dynasty's crown jewels and other treasures from Monbijou Castle hidden in the Bernterode salt mine in central Germany.

May 1945
More than 6,000 paintings are discovered in the Altaussee salt mine's 137 tunnels in Austria, including Michelangelo's masterpiece 'Madonna of Bruges'.

May 1945
In the Siegen copper mine at Westphalia in the west of Germany, The Monuments Men find Charlemagne's relics from Aachen Cathedral. They also uncover paintings, sculptures, manuscripts and other artefacts salvaged from German museums.

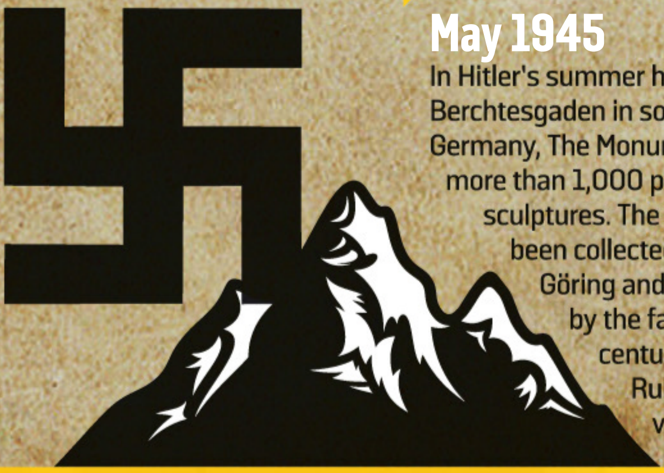
May 1945 The Monuments Men discover about 6,000 works of art, jewellery and furniture at Neuschwanstein Castle in southern Germany. Most had been stolen from French collectors.

April 1945

At the Merkers-Kieselbach mine in Thuringia in central Germany, The Monuments Men salvage gold bars worth over 200 million dollars, sacks of foreign currency and works of art – including the bust of Egyptian queen Nefertiti.

Mid-April 1945

While the war still rages through Nuremberg's streets, The Monuments Men salvage some of the museum's artefacts. Among the valuables recovered is one of Poland's national treasures, the woodcut 15th-century Veit Stoss altarpiece from Kraków. The Nazis stole the 13-metre-high altar in 1941.



May 1945

In Hitler's summer home in Berchtesgaden in southern Germany, The Monuments Men find more than 1,000 paintings and sculptures. The artefacts had been collected by Hermann Göring and include works by the famous 17th-century painters Rubens, Titian and van Dyck.

May 1945

Enough treasure to fill six trucks is uncovered by The Monuments Men in the church in the northern Italian town of San Leonardo.

May 1945 In the monastery at Buxheim, The Monuments Men discover 19th century furniture, artefacts from Russia, oriental rugs and textiles. There are also 158 paintings by Goya, Delacroix and Renoir as well as a conservation and restoration room for the artefacts.

1951 The Monuments Men team is disbanded, having recovered over five million works of art.

Treasures at auction | Hitler's phone

COVETED Collectors also look for treasures other than gold. Hitler's personal belongings are highly sought after.

PRICE In 2017, Hitler's phone was sold for $243,000 to a private collector.

borders. In December, Toldi's people began to fill 42 train wagons with the spoils held in Budapest. The amount of stolen property increased daily, particularly when the new fascist government gave the green light to confiscate all Jewish property except for a few personal belongings, cash and two weeks' worth of food and fuel.

An inventory prepared by Toldi's subordinate Laszlo Avar in October 1945 at the behest of the Allied authorities revealed that the gold train's cargo included 10 45-kg boxes of gold, a 100-kg box of gold coins, 32 boxes of gold watches, 3,000 oriental rugs and eight boxes of diamonds.

Also found in the freight wagons were valuable religious objects, such as the *Keter* (crown) that adorned the Torah scrolls, and wine goblets associated with Sabbath and festival rituals.

25 armed police officers, customs officials, Treasury officials, over 60 armed gendarmes, and Hungarian Fascist party members and their families were placed on the train to guard the valuables as the train left Budapest.

Gold was exchanged for food

The train's first stop was Zirc, around 120 kilometres from the capital. Here, soldiers loaded even more valuables aboard, this time from nearby Obánya Castle, which had become the largest site outside of Budapest for storing objects confiscated from Jews. Once done, the train continued on.

One week later, on 27th December, the train arrived at Brennbergbánya, a mining settlement in Hungary near the border with Austria. The train waited here for three months, protected by armed guards night and day, while Toldi's people carefully examined the stolen crates.

It was during this period that gold, art and gemstone disappeared from the train and the annals of history. As soon as the train arrived at the station in Austria, jewellers, appraisers and bookkeepers started sorting the stolen goods by type and value. No official records were kept, proof it was a closely guarded state secret. But by combining notes written by Toldi's staff with later testimonies, historians have formed a picture of what went on in Brennbergbánya.

These sources state, among other things, that it was here that Toldi's officials removed all the documentation containing the name and addresses of the items' rightful owners before mixing all the valuables together. This would make it impossible to identify anything if the valuables were later reclaimed. Eyewitnesses say that it all took place in the small town's bathhouse.

"The bathhouse was a two-storey house and it also had a large pool in it, and that was completely filled with the gold and the table-sets, and all the Persian carpets, they were all stored there," recalled Brennbergbánya resident Karoly Kromp.

A nearby mining shaft was also used: "The gold itself was in the Borbala shaft... The gold was everywhere – in the bathhouse and also in the shaft," Kromp added.

Toldi monitored the workflow personally. He insisted that the objects were Hungarian 'national assets', and that the officials and soldiers' job was to protect the valuables from the advancing Russians. At the same time, the piles of gold and jewellery began to dwindle, slowly but surely. By studying Toldi's own accounts, historians might conclude that the person responsible sold the valuables to the officials and train guards who in term traded them with the locals for food. In addition, Toldi appeared to look after his own interests too according to one witness. His methods were apparently simple: a few times a day he received closed packages of varying sizes in his office. Later in the evening, his personal assistant would return the packages to the bathhouse; in the intervening period, Toldi had helped himself to anything that tempted him.

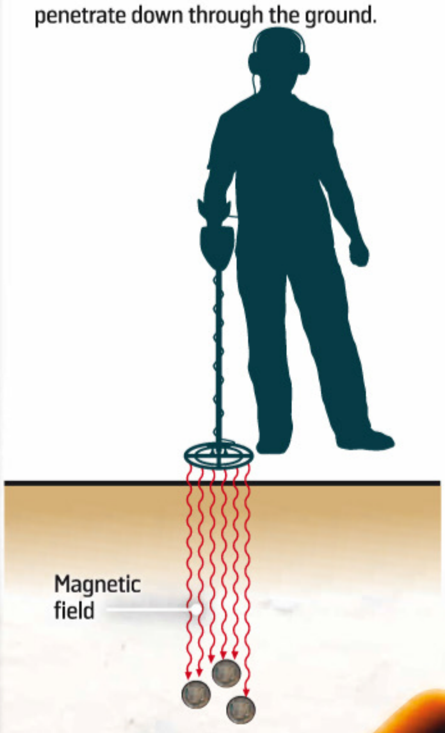
Magnetic field hunts out treasure

One of the treasure hunter's most important tools is the metal detector. Pressing the handle activates an electrical current in the metal detector, which creates a magnetic field that penetrates the ground and detects metal objects.

The metal detector is a tool designed to search for smaller buried objects such as silver coins, gold rings and even old shells. Even a simple metal detector can reveal an object such as a coin five centimetres under the ground. Larger detectors can search much deeper and can even identify metals based on the material's conductive ability. Gold, silver and copper are, for example, better conductors than iron and steel. The data is processed and can be read from the detector's measuring instrument, which relays the strength of the signal by either displaying a fluctuating needle on a meter or by emitting a sound.

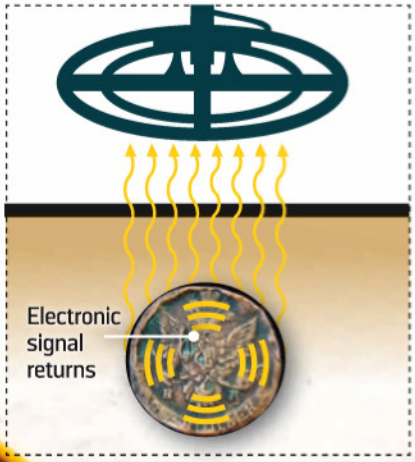
The magnetic field is activated

1 The detector generates an electromagnetic field, which can penetrate down through the ground.



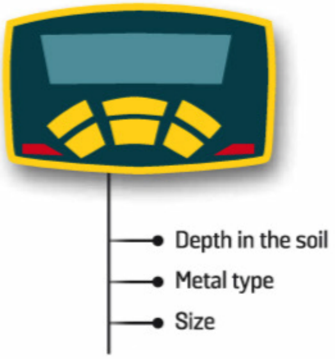
The object responds with an 'electronic signal'

2 The detector's field generates a new magnetic field in any metal object in the ground, which radiates up towards the detector. The metal detector reads the signal from the object in the ground and is then capable of, for example, determining the metal's type.



Microprocessor performs the analysis

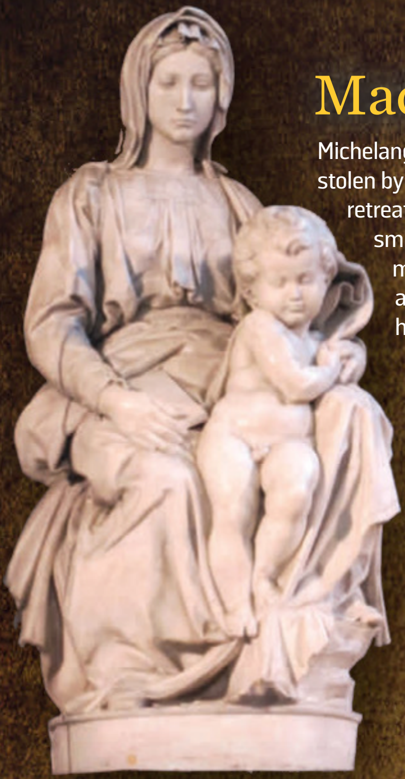
3 A microprocessor in the detector analyses the difference between the time it takes to 'charge' the material in the ground and the time it takes for the signal to be picked up and returned. The time interval indicates the size and type of object.



A metal detector can be operated by anyone and is relatively inexpensive.

Hitler chose the art for his museum

Adolf Hitler had dreams of building a *Führermuseum* (Leader's Museum) in his hometown of Linz, in Austria. The art for the gigantic museum would be carefully selected by the Führer himself and bought with the money he earned from sales from his book, *Mein Kampf*. The museum was never realised.



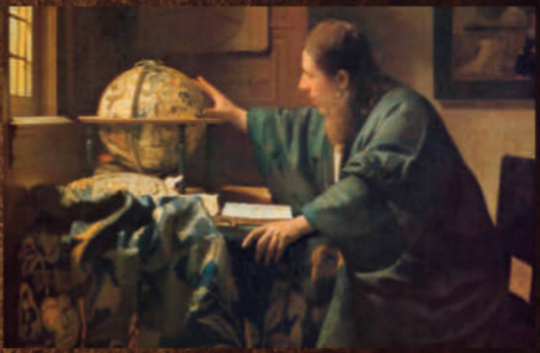
Madonna

Michelangelo's 'Madonna of Bruges' was stolen by the Nazis in 1944 during their retreat from Belgium. The statue was smuggled to Germany under a pile of mattresses in a Red Cross vehicle and – like other works of art – hidden in the Altaussee salt mine.

The sculpture was one of the first to show Jesus as a young child. Before this he had always been portrayed as a baby.

The Astronomer

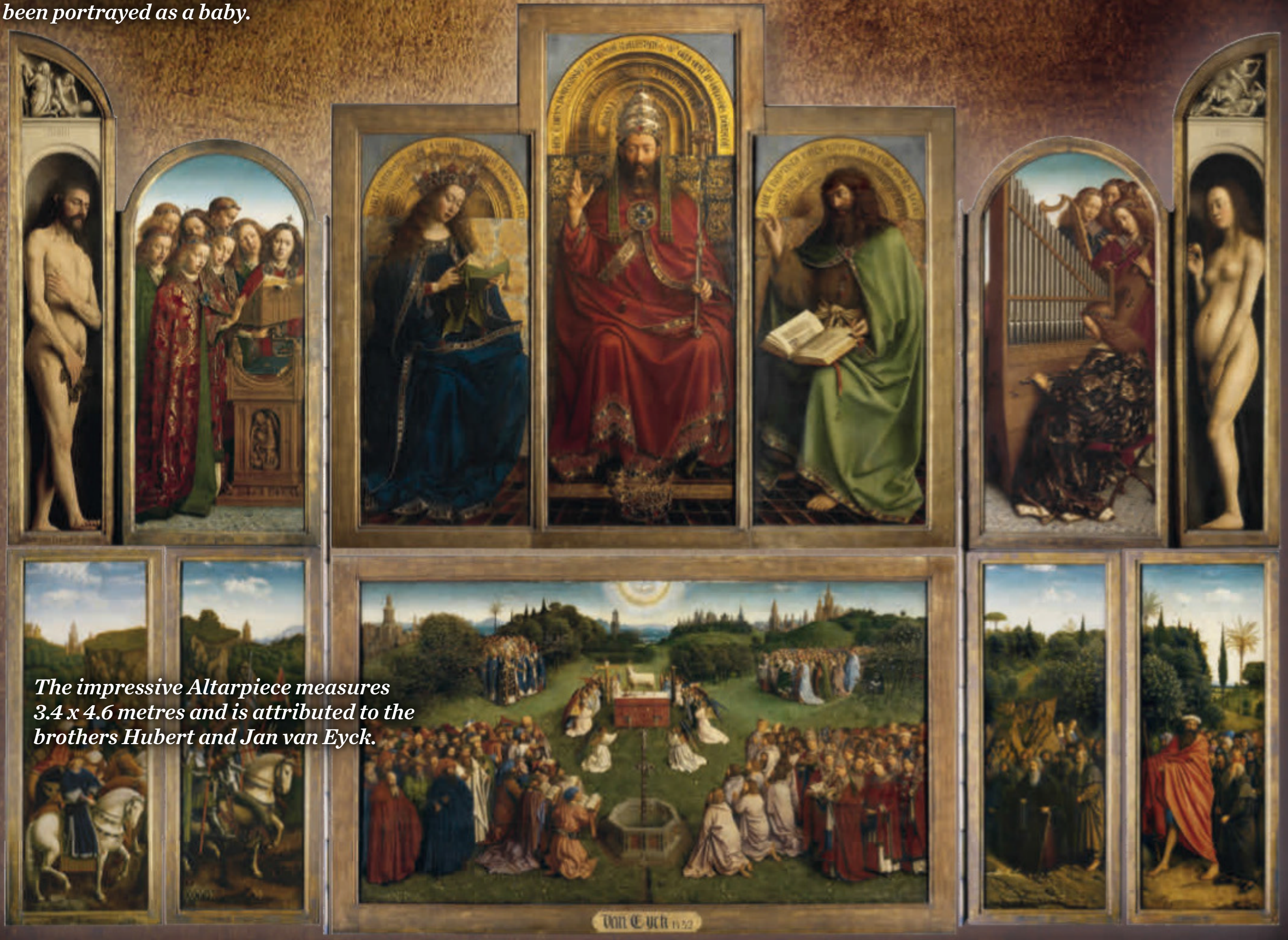
The work of the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer was owned by the wealthy Rothschild family, but was seized in Paris in 1940 immediately after the Nazi occupation of France.



'The Astronomer' is back in Paris. The painting, finished around 1668, can be viewed at the Louvre.

The Altarpiece

The piece from Saint Bavo Cathedral in the Belgian city of Ghent is considered one of Europe's most impressive works of art. In 1942 Hitler ordered that the piece be confiscated and moved to Germany. Here, the artwork was stored in Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria but was later moved to the Altaussee salt mine for fear that Allied air strikes would destroy the irreplaceable masterpiece.



The impressive Altarpiece measures 3.4 x 4.6 metres and is attributed to the brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck.

"In some parcels she saw clothes, large pieces of cloth and heavy little bags. She also saw gold watches and jewellery on the table. On one occasion Toldi showed his wife a shiny object taken out of a little bag. While dealing with the packages they would lock the doors. Mrs Toldi told her daughters on several occasions: 'Come, choose something.'", stated Mrs Zajacz, wife to Todi's personal assistant, in August 1945.

> In some parcels she saw clothes, large pieces of cloth and heavy little bags. She also saw gold watches and jewellery on the table
>
> Testimony from 1945

Fleeing through the chaos of war

Two days after the train's arrival in Brennbergbánya, the Red Army had surrounded Budapest. When the train started to move again on 30th March, 1945 the war was almost lost. Budapest was in Soviet hands, and the Red Army controlled much of Hungary. And Toldi was gone. The night after 30th March, he and his family and a few trusted employees left the train. Toldi took the most valuable items with him.

Toldi used the valuables to purchase fake passports for himself and his family, after which he tried to escape to Switzerland. Meanwhile, the train continued west into Austria, where the situation became increasingly chaotic. The guards were on permanent alert for attacks from both locals as well as soldiers from the German army, which was slowly disintegrating during its withdrawal westwards. In mid-May – about a week after the end of the war – the train had reached Werfen, a town 56 kilometres south-east of Salzburg.

Here it was discovered by an US military unit, and from there, historians know exactly what happened. The Americans interrogated the occupants on 10th July and with the assistance of the Hungarian guards, emptied the train. According to official records it now held 1,500 boxes of silverware, watches, jewellery, 5,250 Persian rugs, several stamp collections and a number of fine porcelain frames. At this point proceedings ground to a halt, and no one seemed apparently keen on handing the valuable objects back to their rightful owners.

Instead, the valuables were stored in a military warehouse in Salzburg for three years before the Allies decided to hold on to the items instead of sending them back to Hungary.

"American Forces having examined the portion of the Hungarian train in the American Zone of Austria, the US Commander [General Mark Clark] determined that the contents therefore were unidentifiable as to owners and, in view of the territorial changes in Hungary, as to national origin; restitution to Hungary being therefore not feasible, it was determined, with the approval of this government, that the property in question would be given to the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees," said US Secretary of State George C Marshall in 1948.

Fear that Stalin would steal treasure

Marshall's argument was a simple one. The onset of a Cold War between the Soviet Union and United States meant the gold train had become a political hot potato. The Americans considered any return of the valuables would be like handing them directly to Stalin. No

Valuables worth billions have still not been found

THE AMBER ROOM was installed in the Catherine Palace in St Petersburg during the 1700s, its panels included 450 kg of amber and gold and jewels valued at more than £380 million (2016 estimate). When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, they plundered the chamber and sent the valuables to East Prussia.

PAINTINGS The Nazis moved a large collection of paintings, including works by van Gogh, to a salt mine in Neu Staßfurt about 30 kilometres outside Magdeburg. During an Allied attack on the city in 1945 a fire broke out in the mine, and the paintings probably fell prey to the flames.

THE KING'S TREASURE A casket of jewellery belonging to the Polish royal family disappeared in 1939, when German soldiers occupied the town of Sieniawa in south-eastern Poland. It was stored with other collections from the Czartoryski Museum. No one knows where it is now.

GOLD BULLION vanished from Germany. The Nazis stole the gold from wealthy families and sent it abroad to buy war materiel. Much of the gold has never been found. Whether it is hidden in mines, lakes, castle vaults or has been laundered, nobody knows for sure.

one believed that the valuables would be restored to their rightful owners, who'd most likely been killed in the gas chambers. But the Americans also had other reasons to be reluctant. Some of the items had improperly fallen into the hands of senior American officers stationed in Europe. For example, in July 1945, Major General Henry J Collins helped himself to rich pickings from the loot. Among the treasures that ended in Collins' private Austrian villa were silverware, porcelain, five rugs, eight paintings, 30 tablecloths, 60 sheets and 60 large bath towels. Collins was not alone.

A recent investigation revealed that there was widespread theft of objects from the train by Americans. Some of the stolen items later ended up in the military's internal storage facilities in Europe or under the auctioneer's hammer in the United States. Toldi – the Hungarian official responsible for the freight – was arrested in August 1945, but released again in November, after which he vanished from history. The Hungarian Jews were far from the only ones who were robbed by the Nazis. From the outset of the war, Hitler's troops looted paintings, sculptures and other works of art whenever they came across them. The Nazis saw themselves as natural protectors of Europe's cultural history. Hitler, who'd originally desired to making his living as an artist, also planned to build a grand museum of art in Linz, where all the stolen treasure would be exhibited.

Europe was drained of art treasure

The cultural plunder was methodical and headed up by Hitler's leading ideologue Alfred Rosenberg and his Reichsleiter Rosenberg Taskforce. Its original purpose was to collect Jewish and

Jewish victims considered the gigantic Torah scrolls containing sacred scriptures among the most important objects the Nazis stole and hid. The scrolls shown here were retrieved in Thuringia in 1945.

Masonic literature and destroy it. Soon, however, Rosenberg and his task force were busy stealing works of art from Jewish families, art museums and other collections. Works by masters such as Michelangelo, Renoir, Rubens and van Gogh were among the art they plundered. American art connoisseurs had got wind of the Nazi raids and tried to find a way to protect the art treasures. In June 1943, President Roosevelt founded The American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas.

The commission later became 'The Monuments Men' – a group of 345 people mostly from the art and museum world. They were tasked with saving historic and cultural monuments from destruction or theft. After the war, the men searched out works of art that the Nazis had hidden.

At times, The Monuments Men almost literally stumbled on to the trail of missing artworks by chance. One notable example was the discovery of a storage facility in the Altaussee salt mines in the Austrian Alps. During a visit to the city of Trier in western Germany in March 1945, Private First Class Lincoln Kirstein got toothache. Captain Robert Posey took him to one of the town's dentists. When the dentist heard about the two men's venture, he introduced them to his son-in-law. The young man had helped the Germans to steal works of art and was now eager to get his family out of Germany and to Paris.

Treasure at auction | Hitler's underpants

LAUNDRY In 1938, Hitler left a pair of underpants with embroidered initials at a hotel in Austria. The pants were sold in 2017 for $6,737 (£4,991) at a US auction.

Hoping to get help from Posey and Kirstein, he told them about a large storage facility in the Altaussee salt mine. Two months later, the two men were the first to crawl through the dark tunnels of the old salt mine. Here, Posey and Kirstein were met by an unusual sight. The light from the men's lamps revealed a magnificent altarpiece with a portrait of the Virgin Mary wearing a crown of flowers, which had been painted by the Dutch master Jan van Eyck in the 15th century. "The miraculous jewels of the Crowned Virgin seemed to attract the light from our flickering acetylene lamps," Kirstein wrote later. "Calm and beautiful, the altarpiece was, quite simply, there."

> The light from the men's lamps revealed a magnificent altarpiece with a portrait of the Virgin Mary wearing a crown of flowers.

Art worth millions hidden in the mine

The mine was the main storage facility for the art that Hitler had chosen for his upcoming art museum in Linz, and proved to be something of an extravaganza. Altaussee had partly been fitted out with a storage room comprising wooden floors, modern light fixtures and dehumidifiers.

No fewer than 6,577 paintings, 2,300 drawings or watercolours, 137 sculptures, 954 art prints and 1,200-1,700 boxes of books were, according to the Nazis' own records, stored in the mine. The sources recorded that the Nazis spent 13 months gathering the works of art in the mine, and they were delivered by tanks and oxen, as trucks were unable to negotiate the steep terrain during the winter. Among the finds was a large box with the inscription *"Vorsicht! Marmor: Nicht Sturzen"* ("Attention! Marble: Do Not Drop"). On closer inspection, the box contained 1,100 pounds (500 kg) of bombs. The local Nazi leader had interpreted Hitler's Nero Decree, which on 19th March, 1945, ordered the destruction of German infrastructure before the Allies' arrival, as an invitation to destroy the works of art too. Fortunately, he didn't detonate the bomb.

> The Amber Room, the gold train and large numbers of artworks remain unaccounted for, but it's still possible the treasures may one day reappear

The Monuments Men found many similar storage facilities underground – including in bunkers and mines. Mines were especially popular, partly because they kept the valuables safe against fire and bombs, and partly because the air below the ground provided constant temperature and humidity. In Altaussee, the temperature fluctuated between 4-8 degrees Celsius between winter and summer, while conditions in salt mines were particularly ideal because the salt absorbed any excess moisture.

After the war, The Monuments Men helped restore the treasures to their rightful owners or their descendants. In 1951 when The Monuments Men completed their work and returned home, the organisation had returned a total of five million works of art. Yet, several artworks are still missing.

The Tsar's Amber Room disappeared

Whether or not it can be called a work of art is uncertain, but one of the most monumental masterpieces that disappeared was the **Tsar's Amber Room** in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). They were set of wall panels made from amber and gold that covered 55 square metres of wall. It had been a gift from Frederick William I of Prussia to the Russian Tsar Peter the Great and had been installed in the Catherine Palace around 30 km south of Leningrad. When the Germans invaded in 1941, the Nazis seized the precious work.

THE AMBER ROOM was created in Prussia between 1701 and 1709 and installed in Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin. When Tsar Peter the Great visited the Amber Room in 1716, he was so thrilled that Frederick William I of Prussia gave him the chamber.

The Germans moved the chamber to the castle museum in Königsberg – modern-day Kaliningrad – in East Prussia. Here the trail ends. Many historians believe the Amber Room was destroyed when Allied bombs hit the castle in August the following year. Yet, over the years, treasure hunters have continued to look for the Amber Room. Wuppertal and Hartenstein in Germany, the Catherine Palace in Russia, Kaliningrad and the Mamerki Museum in Poland are among the places aspiring hunters have at once time or other suggested was the resting place of the Amber Room. As recently as 2017, three German amateur researchers – Leonhard Blume, Peter Lohr and Günther Eckhardt – believed that they had found the chamber. Witness reports gathered by the KGB and Stasi after the war led the men to a cave in the town of Hartenstein in eastern Germany, close to the Czech border. The men were convinced that the cave was close to the railway line to Kaliningrad, and radar also revealed a deep and long tunnel system inside the cave. However, Hartenstein turned out not to house the coveted trophy.

The Amber Room, the gold train and large numbers of artworks remain unaccounted for, but it's still possible the treasures may one day reappear. In 2012 – 67 years after the end of the war – an apartment in Munich was raided by the authorities who confiscated a collection of 121 framed and 1,285 unframed images from masters such as Marc Chagall, Claude Monet and Henri Matisse. The owner, Hildebrand Gurlitt, was a former art dealer and had been hired by the Nazis to sell the stolen art abroad. Instead, Gurlitt kept the art for himself. To cover up the crime, he claimed the works had been burned during the Allied bombardment of the German city of Dresden.

The discovery has given art lovers new hope. Nazi stolen artworks were well hidden, and the hope that they still exist – in private collections or in long-forgotten mine shafts and underground storage facilities – is not unrealistic. Excellent conservation conditions in salt mines also means any works stored here could have remained in good condition. The emergence of new generations also increases the chances of stolen works being found as Robert Edsel, art detective and author of a book on The Monuments Men, concluded in an interview with *Time* Magazine in 2009:

"As the WWII generation passes over the next five to 10 years, these things in attics and basements and on walls will pass on to younger generations, and they might try to sell them. Buyers will want to know what they are buying and where it came from — and that could lead to answers."

The hunt for the Nazi stolen treasures is entering a new era. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

The Nazis looted

- The plunder of art and other valuables was **organised and executed by the government**.
- The Nazis saved works of art in hidden storage facilities, such as ancient salt mines, where the **treasures would be safe from Allied bombs.**
- The treasure was both **high-value and culturally important**.
- **Not all the works of art** and valuables stolen by the Nazis **have been found.**

4

The estimated value of the treasure found by the Americans in the Hungarian Gold Train was $4 billion (2007 prices). Treasure hunters dream of finding a similar train hidden in the Polish landscape.

WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

Which treasures are still missing?

1 Treasures that the art world would otherwise have written off have been found. In 1963, for example, two paintings stolen by Nazis from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence were found to be in the possession of a German waiter in California. Also, as recently as 2017, a 17th-century painting stolen by Nazis from a doctor's surgery in Arnhem in the Netherlands made its way back to the doctor's family. Art experts believe that many of the missing works of art still exist – collectively or individually in storage facilities or private homes – but where they are, nobody knows.

Does the Polish 'gold train' exist?

2 According to legend, during the last months of the war, the Nazis hid a train loaded with gold, works of art and other valuables in an underground tunnel in the north-west of Silesia. The area is now in Poland, but in 1945 was part of the Third Reich. Treasure hunters and adventurers have been looking for the fabled 'gold train' for years, and although experts tend to reject the legend as a myth, aspiring archaeologists and historians still search for the train, which they believe is buried somewhere in a tunnel under Polish soil.

Far from all of the works of art and valuables stolen by the Nazis have been found.

As the war dragged on, Hitler became increasingly dependent on drugs. These undoubtedly influenced his judgment.

HITLER'S FATAL DECISIONS

Hitler's judgement became progressively worse during the war. One possible explanation for his increasingly odd decisions was an escalating use of medication. Originally intended to ease stomach cramps and eczema, the cocktail of drugs grew to include cocaine and sleeping pills.

Deputies! Men of the German Reichstag!” It was 11th December, 1941, and Hitler was speaking from the rostrum of the German Reichstag. In an hour-long speech, he had accused the United States, its president, Franklin D Roosevelt, and the Jews, of conspiring against the German state and inciting war in Europe. Now, came the crescendo: “Germany, Italy and Japan will together conduct the war that has been forced upon them by the United States of America and Britain”.

The Nazi leader had just started a war with the United States and the audience's applause was deafening.

Today, however, historians regard this declaration of war before Germany's packed parliament building as one of Hitler's greatest mistakes. With this address, Hitler opened hostilities against a country with three times Germany's production capacity. Yet, nothing had forced the dictator to take this stance: the US hadn't fired a single shot at the Germans.

> ” US and British generals referred to Hitler their greatest ally .

Declaring war on the US was just one of Hitler's many bizarre decisions, many still baffle historians today. Some commentators even slyly suggest that US and British generals referred to Hitler as their greatest ally due to his regular blunders. Although the statement is probably exaggerated, there is no doubt that the former corporal cost the Germans dearly with his insistence on interfering with everything from overall strategy to specific tactics. One possible cause of Hitler's increasing erratic behaviour and errors of judgement as the war escalated was Hitler's increasing dependence on prescription drugs: in the last year of the war he consumed huge quantities ‘uppers’ and ‘downers’, each stimulating and depressing him in turn. In the long run, his dependence on drugs influenced Hitler so much that he was unable to rule.

Hitler lived on a high

This theory is based on the German author **Norman Ohler's** review of Hitler's medical records. According to Ohler, Hitler's personal doctor for almost eight years, Theodor Morell, pumped the Nazi leader so full of drugs that he fought much of World War II in a narcotic haze.

NORMAN OHLER is a German author who is best known for his book *Blitzed*, which describes Hitler's excessive drug consumption.

Morell had become Hitler's personal doctor in 1936 after an effective treatment for eczema and stomach cramps. In the first few years, Hitler received daily injections of iodine and lime, along with liver and heart extract to boost his levels of the male sex hormone, testosterone. The jewel in the doctor's black medical bag, however, was the drug Vitamultin, which Hitler took both in pill form and through Morell's syringe. According to Morell, Vitamultin was just a healthy cocktail of various vitamins, but later studies of the drug have shown that the miracle cure also contained a significant dose of methamphetamine. This highly addictive substance – which today goes by the street name crystal meth – is related to amphetamine, but is up to five times stronger. The drug increases levels of adrenaline and dopamine in the body, triggering feelings of exhilaration and increased self-confidence and suppressing fatigue and appetite.

> I was so far gone that I could scarcely walk. I was given totally wrong treatments. Finally I was just drinking tea and eating biscuits.
>
> Adolf Hitler on his health in 1936

Apparently, Hitler himself failed to realise that Morell was filling him with mood-enhancing drugs, but the change was evident to everyone else. The daily injections gave Hitler an inexhaustible energy and fuelled his rousing public performances.

The dictator's eczema and stomach cramps were transformed into unpleasant memories, and after the German invasion of Poland at the start of World War II, Hitler gratefully welcomed his new doctor into his inner circle.

"You can never know, doctor, how much I am indebted to Morell," Hitler explained to Dr Erwin Giesing. "He saved my life in 1936. I was so far gone that I could scarcely walk. I was given totally wrong treatments. Finally I was just drinking tea and eating biscuits. Then came Morell, and he cured me."

The German physician's exhilarating injections undoubtedly also buzzed through Hitler's body when he was preparing for the successful invasion of France in the summer of 1940. In a voice filled with zeal and conviction, he prophesised certain success:

"Gentlemen, you are about to witness the most famous victory in history."

The lonely doctor

Hitler's victory on the battlefield meant less work for his ever-present doctor. Morell was never more than a few steps from his patient, but after the Invasion of France, months passed without Hitler needing anything more than basic treatment. Hitler was high on victory. Morell wrote to his wife, Joanna: "He is really fit as a fiddle. He is fresh and cheerful. Medically there's hardly anything

Insight | Military disasters

As the war progressed, Hitler made an increasing number of military gaffes. Despite evidence to the contrary, the Führer remained convinced of his abilities as a brilliant strategist. At the same time, he often showed a strong distrust of his generals' competence on the battlefield.

DUNKIRK In 1940, Hitler issued an order to halt the advance at Dunkirk, enabling almost 340,000 Allied soldiers to make their escape to Britain.

THE BLITZ During the Battle of Britain, Hitler started bombing big cities instead of airbases. It gave the RAF the opportunity to rebuild its forces and hold off the German invasion of the British mainland.

for me to do here". Morell felt isolated – most the generals abhorred the grandiose doctor and envied him his close relationship with Hitler.

As a civilian without a patient, Morell quickly ended up as an outsider. "I always sit on my own. [...] If it were not for the Führer, I would sometimes be glad to be at home", he wrote in 1940, a few months before his 54th birthday.

The doctor hated his lonely existence and tried everything to fit in with the high-ranking generals and win their favour.

Morell even designed his own military uniform. It had a green collar adorned with gold symbols of the Greek god of healing, Asclepius. The generals did not protest, but the doctor's awkward military styling failed to bring acceptance either. However, when Morell ventured to add an SS belt buckle, it was a step too far and he was ordered to remove the symbol.

Wolf's Lair led to bunker psychosis

In the summer of 1941, Hitler moved into his new headquarters: Wolf's Lair – a gigantic, impenetrable fort in East Prussia (now North-east Poland). From here he coordinated the war against Stalin's Red Army. For three years, more than 2,000 officers, soldiers and civilians lived a spartan existence in the damp, claustrophobic barracks, most of whom cursed their new remote situation. Among them was Morell, who was now rarely more than a needle's length away from his top patient. "My boots are mildewed, clothes clammy. [I am suffering from] stenocardia, anaemia [and] bunker psychosis", the doctor wrote in his diary on 23rd June, 1941.

Hitler, however, loved the new surroundings. Wolf Lair's isolation gave him the chance to play soldier, and Germany's rapid early progress in the war against the Soviets was intoxicating to him. But after a few months in the damp, confined structure reality hit: the Nazi leader became ill for the first time in years.

Morell was summoned. There was no time waste. The message was clear: "Come to the Führer *straight away!*"

Morell grabbed his medical bag and ran to see his patient. When the doctor arrived, Hitler lay in bed with a high fever and severe diarrhoea. Morell pumped the Führer full of Vitamultin and glucose, but that was just for starters.

In the following days, the doctor supplemented his patient's natural immune system with an artificial shield consisting of a jumble of various substances, including a potent hormone treatment derived from uterine blood and Orchikrin, an anti-depressant derived from bulls' testicles. Morell stuck Hitler with his new miracle cocktail several times a day and the Führer quickly revived.

Hitler took 80 different substances

The new cocktail consisted of more than 80 different substances, which included

OPERATION BARBAROSSA Hitler ordered the campaign against the Soviet Union, forcing Germany to fight a war on two fronts – a strategy his generals warned him against.

D-DAY Hitler was fooled by the Allies and did not believe that the invasion had actually begun. As a result, he failed to order a timely counteroffensive that could have thrown the Allies back into the sea.

> The offensive in the Soviet Union had stalled, and by December 1941, the Red Army had pushed the Germans out of Moscow. Hitler cut himself off, endlessly pondering solutions to the problems in the East.

From 1941, Hitler was closely involved in the military decisions on the Eastern Front.

hormones, steroids and other substances known only to Morell. The doctor had thus ensured that Hitler – who was becoming increasingly manic and divorced from reality – was now completely dependent on his medication, and that he himself would no longer be left alone and isolated. Neither Morell nor Hitler were interested in understanding the root causes of the Führer's ailing physical and mental health. A strong bond of equal parts blind confidence and superficial symptom treatment kept them together, and as long as the doctor kept his patient upright, all was well with the world.

Morell's growing influence was arousing genuine concern among Hitler's loyal supporters. Hitler's mood was erratic, and many feared he was losing his grip on the war. The offensive in the Soviet Union had stalled, and by December 1941, the Red Army had pushed the Germans out of Moscow. Hitler cut himself off, endlessly pondering solutions to the problems in the East.

"[It is] tragic that the Führer is closing himself off from life like this, and leading such a disproportionately unhealthy existence", propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels wrote in his **diary** at the beginning of 1942. "He no longer gets any fresh air, he doesn't take any kind of relaxation, he just sits in his bunker."

DIARY
Hitler's most loyal Nazi supporter, Joseph Goebbels, kept a diary from 1933 to 1945. Here, among other things, he noted his day-to-day observations of the Führer.

While Hitler closed himself off, his injections escalated. As a thank you for the constant care, he gave his faithful doctor a Czech cooking oil factory, which Morell used to increase the production of Vitamultin pills, which were now marketed throughout Germany.

By the summer of 1943, Morell expanded his medical empire by opening a factory in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Here, Russian prisoners of war daily transformed tonnes of pig stomachs, sheep livers and chicken feet into hormone and testosterone preparations. The resulting products were sold to both the German armed forces and the wider population, and Morell became wealthy off the back of his 'medicinal' patents.

When the doctor's usual cocktail was no longer effective, Morell decided to pull out the big guns. He injected 'Patient A', as he called Hitler in his medical notes, with the heroin-like substance Eukodal. This had the immediate effect of sending the patient into a euphoric state, but led to dependence after just a few weeks of use.

The stimulating effect of this substance on the Führer could not to be mistaken. Hitler was transformed: energy radiated from the revitalised dictator. With Eukodal in his veins, his famous oratory skills returned and in an intense three-hour discussion, Hitler persuaded the Italian dictator, Mussolini, to continue in the war against the Allies – despite the fact that Il Duce had actually planned to announce Italy's surrender.

"Contrary to expectation his appearance is extraordinarily good [...] He has had hardly two hours' sleep, and now looks as if he had just come back from a holiday," Goebbels wrote in his diary on 10th September, 1943.

In the summer of 1944, Hitler returned to the Wolf's Lair. There, he was the target of an almost-successful assassination attempt. The plot was code named 'Operation Valkyrie', and was instigated by a group of rebellious German officers who successfully planted a bomb in the Wolf's Lair bunker. The goal was to kill Hitler and initiate peace negotiations with the enemy.

> He no longer gets any fresh air, he doesn't take any kind of relaxation, he just sits in his bunker.
>
> Joseph Goebbels on Hitler

The assassination attempt failed, but the blast affected Hitler's eardrums and gave the dictator a chronic headache that even Eukodal could not mask. Ear specialist Dr Giesing was summoned, and prescribed cocaine to be taken as eye and nose drops. Hitler had previously condemned cocaine as a "Jewish degeneration drug", but Giesing assured the Führer that there was no such risk in this because "A real cocaine addict snorts dry cocaine". The German leader, who five years previously had made a virtue out of being a teetotaller could now no longer stand up without drugs.

Hitler's withdrawal

By this point, Hitler's body had more holes than a pin cushion and he trembled so badly that he could no longer hold a cup of tea without spilling the contents on the floor. Other high-ranking Nazis were openly concerned about Hitler's state of health.

In December 1944, General Von Manteuffel met Hitler, describing him as "a bent figure with a pale, sunken face, collapsed on his chair, with trembling hands, hiding his left, violently twitching arm to the best of his ability".

In the spring of 1945, the Third Reich stood on the brink of collapse. The Red Army was approaching Berlin, and the supply of narcotics now supporting the Führer suddenly stopped. Hitler had never questioned Morell's methods, but without his daily fix, he was hit with full-on withdrawal symptoms. Hitler, depressed, stumbled around in the dark. The tremors wracked his body, and the drug-induced euphoria receded.

The Führer's body and mind screamed for an injection, but as Morell could not deliver, the frustrations quickly began to accumulate in 'Patient A'.

On 21st April, Hitler exploded in a violent and uncontrollable rage. Grabbing the doctor by the collar, he screamed that Morell had betrayed him. "Go home, take off your uniform and act as if you've never seen me!"

Morell was devastated at being dismissed by the man to whom he had devoted his life. The doctor went straight to bed and cried before taking one of the last flights out of Berlin, which by now was ringed by Red Army forces. Nine days later, Hitler took his life and bit into a cyanide

Everyone makes mistakes

DIEPPE
On 19th August, 1942, over 6,000 Allied soldiers tried to land at Dieppe in France. The German defence was surprisingly strong, however, and the decision turned out to be lethal mistake. 3,000 men were killed, wounded or captured in a single day.

MAGINOT LINE
Following WWI France built the Maginot Line: a heavily fortified defence against German incursions. Behind barbed wire and fortifications, the French felt safe, but German panzer divisions bypassed the defensive line by attacking via Belgium. France fell in weeks.

PEARL HARBOR
Japan wanted to create an empire in East Asia, but feared US interference. Therefore, the Empire attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 to destroy the US Navy. Instead of eliminating a threat, however, Japan woke a sleeping giant, who ended up destroying the country's existing empire.

OFFICERS
Between 1936 and 1938, Stalin purged the Soviet Union's officers' corps to strengthen his own position. The lack of skilled and experienced leaders proved deadly, especially early in the war, when the Germans penetrated the Red Army's defences inflicting huge defeats on Stalin's forces.

MYTH BUSTER | Winter uniforms

Germans invaded in summer uniforms

When the Russian winter hit, the Germans were totally unprepared. That is how the myth goes, but it's time to bury the fiction. The Germans had winter uniforms; the problem was primarily one of logistics.

Hitler personally involved himself in the East campaign much more than in previous operations. Among his predictions (and expectations) was that the campaign against the Soviet Union would be over in three months – that is, no later than 1st October, which was before the intense Russian cold could really set in.

"We have only to kick in the front door and the whole rotten edifice will come tumbling down", Hitler announced before the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Admittedly, its neighbour had a larger army, but the Germans were better organised and had more experienced officers. In the beginning, the invasion went according to plan: the Russians were caught unaware, and during the first week, five Russian armies and over 2,000 aircraft were wiped out.

But fatally for the campaign, Hitler rejected his generals' advice to send the troops en masse to Moscow – the hub for the Red Army's supplies. As a result, **the Germans did not reach Moscow until December 1941**, by which time the infamous Russian winter had paralysed Hitler's troops. The German military did have large quantities of winter uniforms, but logistically, it was impossible to get them all the way to the front line, where the German army was scattered across a vast area. The German logistics corps' efforts were hampered by mud, ice and snow, and the few supplies that made it through to the front primarily consisted of food and ammunition, which were considered the priority.

The soldiers, therefore, stole uniforms and boots from dead Russians in order to survive the bitter -30° C temperatures. It wasn't enough; the cold was inexorable. Eyewitnesses reported how they surprised thousands of German soldiers marching through Minsk and Smolensk. They looked like live bodies without ears, noses and fingers – the cold had frozen them off. Even the eyelids had disappeared on many. "Singed by the cold, the eyelid drops off like a piece of dead skin", an eyewitness reported.

MYTH IN BRIEF

Despite countless warnings, the German generals underestimated the Russian winter and sent its soldiers off without appropriate winter uniforms. The error cost Germany victory in the East.

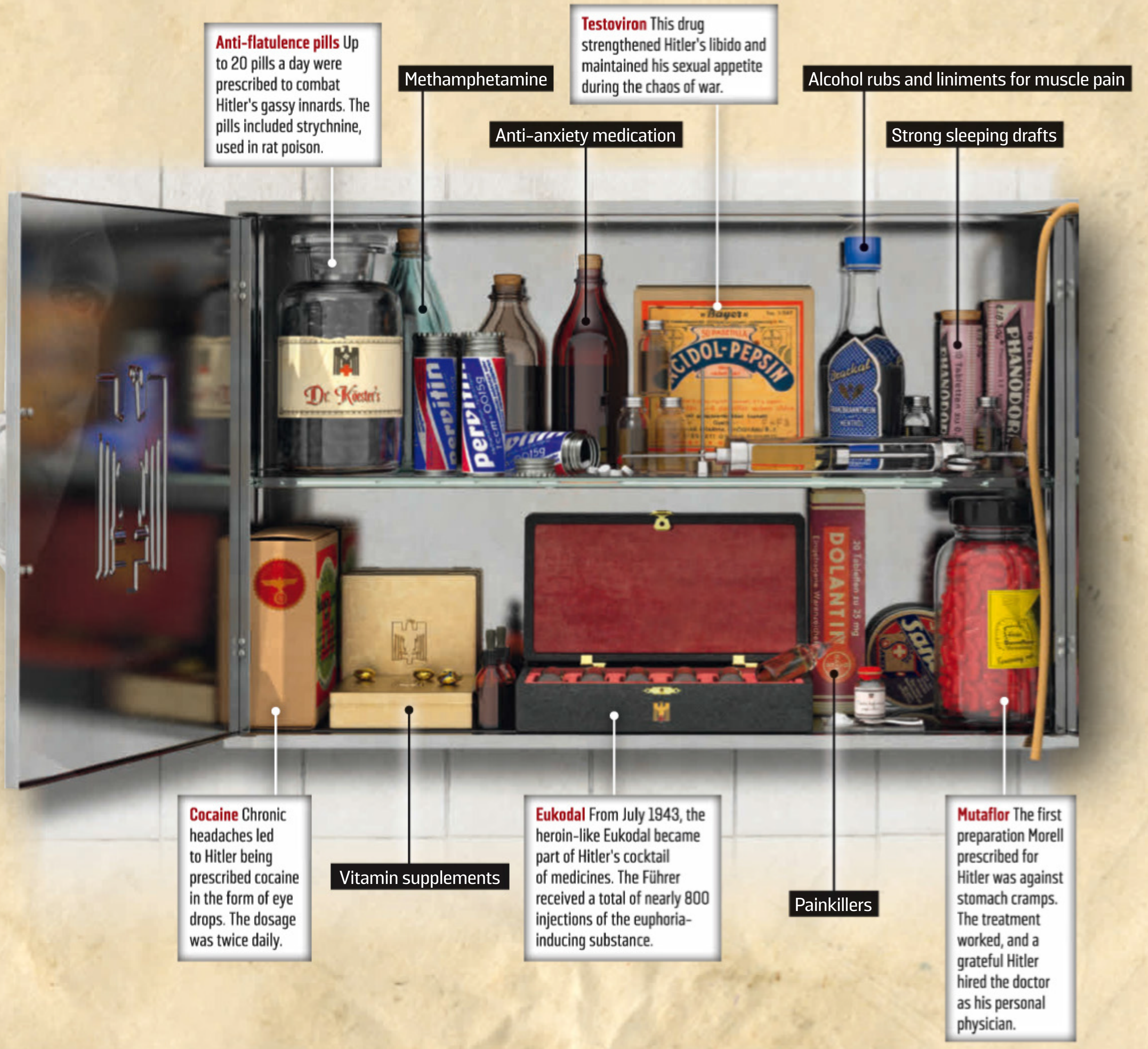
> The German military did have large quantities of winter uniforms

The German army expected to finish the Russian campaign during autumn. Thus, winter uniforms would be unnecessary.

The Führer made big decisions while heavily medicated

82 different drugs ran through Adolf Hitler's veins towards the end of World War II. The Führer's huge drug habit included everything from testosterone injections to cocaine.

These weren't mild medications, either. Reviewing journals written by his personal doctor, Theodor Morell, historians have gained an insight into the extent of the Führer's drug problem. Today, there is no doubt that the quantities of these medications, which included everything from hallucinatory sleeping pills to reality-distorting cocaine, affected Hitler's judgment – especially at the end of the war, when the abuse escalated tremendously.


Methamphetamine
Anti-anxiety medication
Alcohol rubs and liniments for muscle pain
Strong sleeping drafts
Vitamin supplements
Painkillers
Dr Koester's
Pervitin
Bayer
Acidol-Pepsin
Dolantin
Phanodorm

Anti-flatulence pills Up to 20 pills a day were prescribed to combat Hitler's gassy innards. The pills included strychnine, used in rat poison.

Testoviron This drug strengthened Hitler's libido and maintained his sexual appetite during the chaos of war.

Cocaine Chronic headaches led to Hitler being prescribed cocaine in the form of eye drops. The dosage was twice daily.

Eukodal From July 1943, the heroin-like Eukodal became part of Hitler's cocktail of medicines. The Führer received a total of nearly 800 injections of the euphoria-inducing substance.

Mutaflor The first preparation Morell prescribed for Hitler was against stomach cramps. The treatment worked, and a grateful Hitler hired the doctor as his personal physician.

capsule and felt the lethal dose paralysing his respiratory functions.

Hitler's personal physician, Theodor Morell, (seated on the left) catalogued the Führer's extensive drug use.

British army escaped

Plenty of evidence exists today to suggest that Hitler's drug use influenced a number of decisions that may ultimately have cost Germany the war. During the invasion of Poland in 1939 and through most of the campaign in France in 1940, Hitler and his generals had appeared to be true military geniuses. But costly errors occurred when they attempted to attack Britain.

The mistakes started at Dunkirk, on the English Channel at the end of May 1940. Fast-moving armoured German forces had defeated the Belgian and Dutch armies and pushed French and British forces into a rapid retreat across northern France.

Soon the Germans had the 300,000 Allied soldiers surrounded at Dunkirk with their back to the sea. It was time for the Germans to crush the British and French forces, but to everyone's astonishment, Hitler issued the order to halt.

For three days, German forces passively waited, while hundreds of thousands of British and French soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk in one of history's greatest rescue missions.

Some experts, like the British military historian Ronald Lewin, have pointed out that Hitler may have believed Hermann Göring's assurances that the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) could prevent an evacuation. Others believe that the German leader deliberately avoided destroying the British forces because he hoped to enter into a peace agreement with Britain, which he admired, at a later date.

338,000 soldiers were rescued and taken to safety on the other side of the Channel by a flotilla of more than 800 large and small ships. The Luftwaffe sank six destroyers, eight transport vessels and more than 200 smaller boats, but it failed to keep Göring's promise to prevent the evacuation.

The strategy against Britain failed

Lewin estimates that Hitler could have crushed the British forces at Dunkirk and launched an invasion of Britain immediately afterwards. With Britain defeated, Germany would have been free to concentrate on the Eastern Front.

Hitler missed a second chance to beat the Churchill's forces during the Battle of Britain in August 1940, when he suddenly switched his strategy. At a time when Britain was perilously close to running out of combat aircraft and pilots, the dictator ordered the Luftwaffe to stop bombing Britain's airfields and armament factories and to focus on civilian targets instead.

The most likely reason for this decision came as a result of a navigational error: during a bombing run a lone German aircraft had lost its bearings and accidentally dropped its bombs on London. The British retaliated by carrying out a number of raids against Berlin. The attacks infuriated Hitler and caused him to switch tactics and order a bombing campaign of London and other major British cities.

In addition to seeking revenge, the Führer hoped to terrorise the civilian population and force the country's surrender. But despite the loss of 23,000 civilians in the following months, the British support for the war effort never waned – quite the contrary. At the same time, the air force was able to rebuild its forces and renew its efforts against the Luftwaffe.

Some historians claim that Hitler's failure to complete his invasion of Britain was because he needed his forces on the Eastern Front. Although Germany had signed **a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1939**, Hitler announced in June 1940 at a conference with his military chiefs that the intention was "to bring about the destruction of the vitality of Russia in the spring of 1941". Few are in doubt today that the invasion of the Soviet Union was a huge mistake. But in 1941, opinion was less certain. Initially, the campaign seemed

MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP-PACT

was the name of the non-aggression pact that Germany entered into with the Soviet Union on 23rd August, 1939, just one week before Hitler's attacked Poland.

Raw material shortage | Oil

NECESSARY Without access to the Russian oil fields in the Caucasus, Hitler's army was lost.

RUNNING DRY At the end of the war, the Germans could not keep the army running because of a lack of fuel.

likely to succeed – not according to Hitler's generals – but among high-ranking US and British military officers.

Western leaders feared that the Red Army would soon collapse. Field Marshal John Dill, Chief of Staff of the British Army, even went so far as to state that "the Germans will go through Russia like a hot knife through butter".

Stalingrad and Moscow cost too much

Maybe the campaign against the Soviets could have succeeded. A hard, Russian winter, fragile supply lines and the army's lack of winter equipment have often been highlighted as reasons for German defeat. But as historians point out, Hitler could have been victorious if he had listened to his military advisers – not least the chief of the army's high command, General Franz Halder. The general argued that Germany should focus the main Axis force – 3.7 million men – on a single goal: to take Moscow. By capturing the capital, they could have severed the links between the Soviet forces in the field and their political and strategic nerve centre in Moscow.

Instead, Hitler chose to divide his soldiers into three groups: a northern army bound for a long siege of Saint Petersburg, a southern one that would occupy the oil fields in the Caucasus, and a central army that slowly fought its way towards Moscow. Hitler repeatedly refused the advice of his generals and engaged in battles – like the one at Stalingrad – that had limited military value and yet cost Germany time, men and materiel. At the same time, Hitler repeatedly issued orders to the officers to fight to death instead of retreating and regrouping when the situation demanded it. The dictator's insistence that no German soldier should give an inch of ground was strategically absurd and also created serious tension between the Führer and his army.

There is a long list of German officers who were dismissed or demoted because they made a tactical retreat against Hitler's standing orders. However, the list of soldiers who died or were captured because officers obeyed those orders and therefore failed to withdraw from hopeless situations is much longer. Between 1941 and 1945, the campaign in the East cost more than five million German, Hungarian, Romanian and Italian lives.

The Middle East's oil was crucial

Hitler's decision to take on the Soviet Union also had repercussions on another sphere of war that could have contributed decisively to German victory. Hitler's generals repeatedly urged the Führer to subjugate North Africa and, along with the Italians, turn the Mediterranean into a fascist lake. His military advisers recommended that larger forces be sent against Gibraltar, Malta and the Suez Canal, but their counsel was rejected.

Had Hitler followed this advice, he could have cut the link between the British fleet in northern Europe and the country's forces in the Far East. At the same time, German forces would have had free access to not only the valuable oil in the Middle East, but also the southern borders of the Soviet Union via Turkey. Finally, the Germans from Dakar in Senegal would have had a strategically important base that could have been used to expand and support the Atlantic fleet.

But the Führer never realised the extent of military capabilities in North Africa, and his inability to see the big picture made long-term planning difficult. Add to that an escalating drug addiction during the war's last year, and it's little wonder that his decisions became increasingly arbitrary. Hitler's dubious capabilities as a commander reached a point where the Allies considered whether a planned assassination of the Nazi leader was a bad idea. As head of the War Cabinet Secretariat, General Hastings Ismay wrote that from a "strictly military point of view, it [...is] almost an advantage that Hitler should remain in control of German strategy having regard to the blunders that he has made". ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

Hitler was a medical wreck

- Theodor Morell's medical notes show that **Hitler took huge quantities of medically prescribed drugs, which undoubtedly affected his judgment.**
- **Hitler failed to prioritise efforts in the Middle East** which could have secured him the region's crucially important oil fields.
- Anti-Semitism and a dream of **Nazi world domination persuaded Hitler to go to war** against the Soviet Union and the United States.

1941

was the year in which Hitler made two fatally flawed decisions: first, in June, he initiated the invasion of the Soviet Union, then, just six months later, he declared war on the United States.

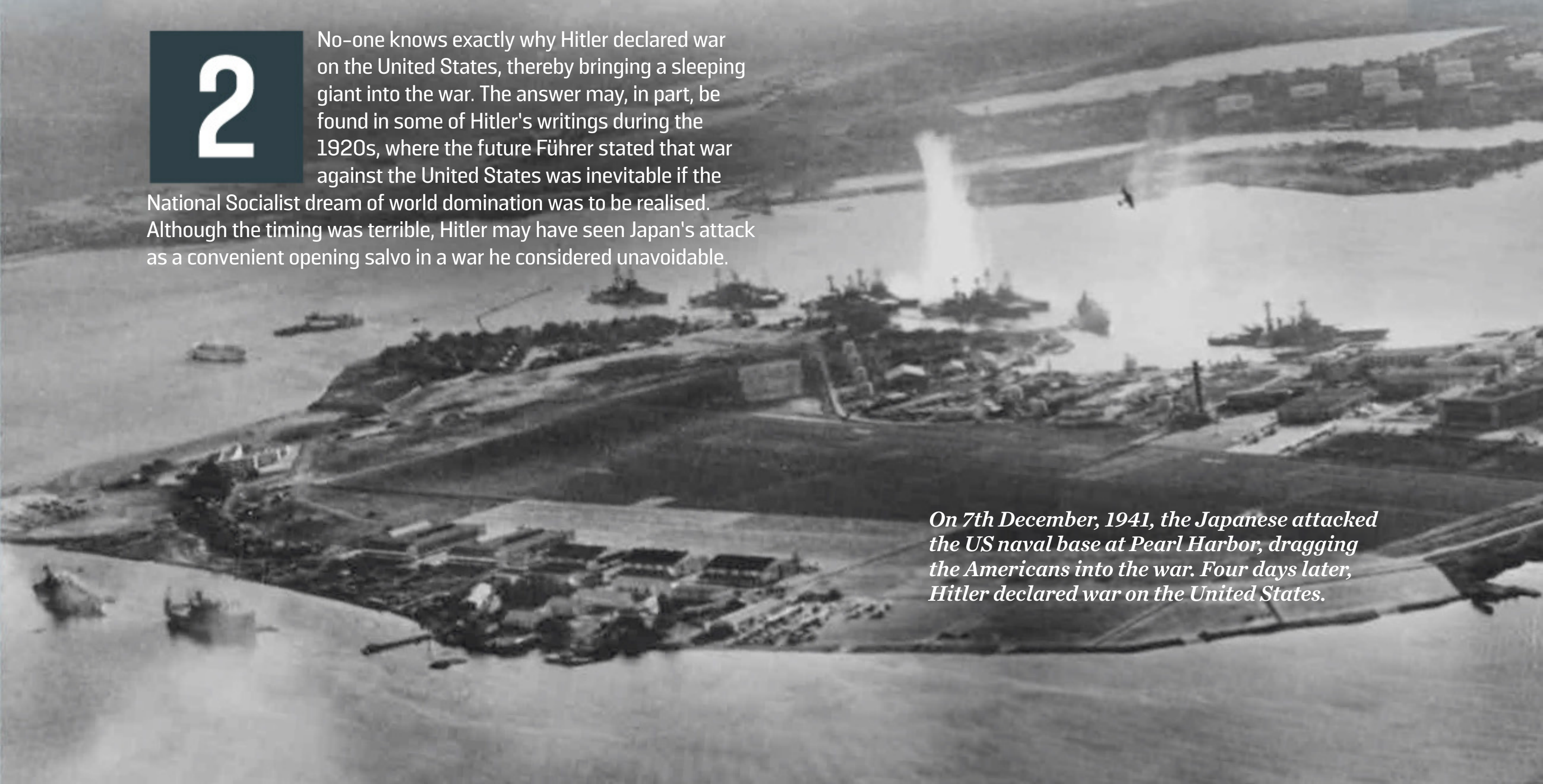
WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

Could Germany have defeated the Soviet Union?

1 Historians still discuss whether Operation Barbarossa could have succeeded. There is no doubt that the Germans made several mistakes during the invasion, including a 38-day delay at the outset to help Italy invade Greece. Hitler's later decision to direct part of his force south to capture Ukraine was also a major blunder. The decision further delayed the attack on Moscow, meaning that when the German forces finally reached the Russian capital, the fatally harsh winter had already set in.

Why did Hitler declare war on the US after Pearl Harbor?

2 No-one knows exactly why Hitler declared war on the United States, thereby bringing a sleeping giant into the war. The answer may, in part, be found in some of Hitler's writings during the 1920s, where the future Führer stated that war against the United States was inevitable if the National Socialist dream of world domination was to be realised. Although the timing was terrible, Hitler may have seen Japan's attack as a convenient opening salvo in a war he considered unavoidable.



On 7th December, 1941, the Japanese attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, dragging the Americans into the war. Four days later, Hitler declared war on the United States.

The science behind V-2 rockets was groundbreaking in the 1940s. They were the most visible evidence of German engineering capabilities.

GERMAN SECRET WEAPONS

Nazi engineers worked secretly on developing aircraft, rockets and other weapons that were ahead of their time. The secret projects were designed to change the fortunes of war, and one could have done so: a nuclear bomb. Today, no one knows how close the Germans came to having atomic weapons.

Wernher von Braun waited nervously on the roof of the rocket assembly hall at **Peenemünde** on the German Baltic coast. It was a little after 16.00 on a sunny Saturday in October 1942, and the head of the Nazi rocket programme gazed intently at a launch pad two kilometres to the north. Here, a bullet-shaped rocket 14 metres high pointed up into the deep blue sky. The black and white patterned V-2 rocket represented the 31-year-old von Braun's dream of reaching space and the Nazis' fervent hopes for a miracle weapon that would terrorise the British, crush their fighting spirit and bring victory to the Third Reich.

PEENEMÜNDE is located in north-eastern Germany, where the river Peene flows into the Baltic Sea.

> ” Hitler's hope of secretly developing an incredible and groundbreaking superweapon seemed to have borne fruit.

Having spent most of his adult life in the rocket industry, von Braun had learned that no rocket was a success until it had safely left the pad. In the case of the V-2, he had additional cause for concern: two previous attempts to send the liquid-fuelled rocket into the air during 1942 had ended in failure, both exploding shortly after lift-off.

Rocket engineer von Braun wasn't alone; thousands of other people had gathered at the rocket base. Everyone held their breath as they listened to the countdown over the speaker system. Clouds of steam cascaded down the rocket's sides, and a siren wailed immediately before firing. Then it happened: a giant flame shot out from the rocket's tail, at which point the rocket lifted as if in slow motion. For a short moment, it appeared as if it was resting on top of the flames, but then the rocket muscled its way upwards, a deafening thunder rolling over the launch area in its wake. Four seconds after take-off, the rocket began to bank to the east as it rose in an elegant curve over the Baltic Sea. 21 seconds later, the V-2 broke the sound barrier and was simply a bright spot on the horizon. Hitler's hope of secretly developing an incredible and groundbreaking superweapon seemed to have borne fruit.

The weapon was a crucial breakthrough for the Nazis. Throughout the Third Reich, engineers and the empire's brightest minds were busily working on weapons the world had never seen, so-called *wunderwaffen* (miracle weapons). And the V-2 rocket was the most ambitious project so far.

Rocket faster than speed of sound

Back in Peenemünde a critical phase lay ahead: the plan was for the V-2 to continue on a curved trajectory up to almost 85 kilometres altitude,

THE GYROSCOPE is a simple instrument that can measure direction in the air and help correct course automatically.

reaching the threshold of space, after which at a speed of almost 5,000 km/h – four times the speed of sound – the engine would cut out and it would glide back down through the atmosphere. As the rocket met the atmosphere, extreme frictional heat would arise, and no one knew if the structure could withstand the load. But five infinitely long minutes after firing, von Braun tasted the sweetness of victory: the V-2's signal was cut short indicating it had stayed the distance and splashed – as planned – into the Baltic. A 190-km journey had been achieved, one that would prove to have far-reaching consequences.

For the Nazis, the V-2 rocket represented one of several desperate hopes to turn the tide in the long and gruelling world war. The successful test launch convinced Hitler of the V-2's potential and just one month later, the Führer approved the series production of rocket weapons, a groundbreaking innovation.

Up until this point, rockets had used solid fuel that was both heavy and inefficient. But the V-2 used a new type of fuel in the form of liquid oxygen and ethanol, which gave it a maximum speed of 5,570 km/h and a range of up to 320 km, considerably longer than even the best artillery.

The space rocket, which had the technical name Aggregat 4 (A4), was a so-called long-range ballistic missile. Like a cannonball, this type of weapon follows a predetermined curved path through the air. A critical element is the automatic control system – in the case of the A4/V-2, **gyroscopes** (mechanical instruments that determine orientation) continually maintained the vehicle's position by sending signals to the tail fin's four external rudders, which helped keep the rocket on course.

In his wildest dreams, the Führer even imagined the V-2 rocket would be able to drop a nuclear bomb over Britain. This type of devastating weapon was still only theoretical, but before the outbreak of war in 1938, two German chemists – Otto Hahn and Fritz Stassmann – had discovered the possibility of releasing huge amounts of energy by splitting atoms, the so-called fission process, and Nazi scientists were hard at work

The so-called Amerikabomber was developed to fly from Germany and bomb targets in the United States.

trying to exploit this breakthrough to produce history's first atomic bomb.

After liberating the southern German city of Haigerloch in April 1945, the Allies found a fission test reactor hidden in a beer cellar under the palace church.

Eyewitnesses saw a nuclear bomb

After WWII broke out in 1939, Hahn and fellow German Werner Heisenberg, a physicist and Nobel laureate, were the driving force behind a group of scientists known as the *Uranverein* (Uranium Society). They were tasked with investigating the technical and military capabilities of the fission process. In a cave in the small, southern German town of Haigerloch, the researchers worked on constructing a test reactor, where they aimed to create a self-sustaining chain reaction, the prerequisite for developing nuclear energy and then an atomic bomb. To start the chain reaction, they needed heavy water, which was only produced on a large scale in German-occupied Norway, at the Norsk Hydro plant in Rjukan.

In a bold action in February 1943, British-trained Norwegian commandos sabotaged the heavy water plant, and in November of that year, Allied aircraft bombed the factory. Three months later, in February 1944, the Norwegians sank a rail ferry carrying the last stock of the precious heavy water, seemingly putting an end to any German plans for nuclear weapons.

Thanks to the Allies' intervention, the Nazis no longer had access to the necessary supplies of heavy water – the idea of nuclear weapons landing in German hands was an unimaginable nightmare.

At least, that was how the story was told after World War II ended in 1945. Today, historians aren't so sure. In his book *Hitlers Bombe* (Hitler's Bomb), which comprises an extensive review of archival material, German historian Rainer Karlsch claims that German scientists tested nuclear weapons in two separate experiments: in October 1944 on the island of Rügen in the Baltic Sea, and again in March 1945, this time in Thuringia in central Germany.

The statement is backed up by three key eyewitness accounts, including that of Luigi Romersa, a former war reporter for Milan newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. For years, Romersa recounted the story of how he visited Hitler in October 1944 before being flown to an island in the Baltic Sea. Romersa said he was taken to a bunker where he witnessed an explosion: "There was a slight tremor in the bunker; a sudden, blinding flash, and then a thick cloud of smoke. It took the shape of a column and then that of a big flower." The men wearing protective clothing that drove him away from the site told him he'd seen a "disintegration bomb".

Unfortunately, Romersa couldn't remember the name of the island he claimed to have visited or who was responsible for the demonstration.

> Germany's best minds turned [to] developing long-range bombers that could drop a bomb load of around 4.5 tonnes over the US.

A more credible witness is possibly the late Clare Werner, who lived in Thuringia during the war. On 4th March, 1945, Werner saw an explosion:

"Not too far away was the military training base near the town of Ohrdruf. Unexpectedly there was a flash of light. I suddenly saw something, it was as bright as hundreds of bolts of lightning, red on the inside and yellow on the outside… It all happened so quickly, and then we couldn't see anything at all. We just noticed there was a powerful wind…"

The following day, Heinz Wachsmut, a man working for a local excavation company, was ordered to cremate a number of bodies. According to Wachsmut, the corpses had terrible burns. He also reported that senior SS officers had said something new had been tested, which the whole world would soon talk about.

> The aim was to devastate New York, not only in retaliation for German losses but also to tie more US troops into defending their homeland.

If nuclear weapons were tested, they were probably so-called "dirty bombs" that aren't nuclear weapons in the strictest sense. A dirty bomb is based on conventional chemical explosives, but contains radioactive substances that are spread over a larger area by the explosion.

Despite all of these eyewitness accounts, it's hard to believe the theory that the Nazis were developing an A-bomb – at least if one reads the statements from the scientific director of the German nuclear programme.

"I don't believe a word of the whole thing," said Werner Heisenberg after hearing the news the US had dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. According to Heisenberg, Germany had abandoned all major work into its nuclear project back in 1942 and never achieved a successful chain reaction. On top of this, the country had no effective means of enriching uranium.

"No orders were given to build atomic bombs," Heisenberg recalled in his memoirs.

The fact that research halted in 1942 makes perfect sense because by this point Germany needed to focus its dwindling resources. German leaders could see any nuclear programme required tremendous investment and would not yield results until years in the future. Instead, they concentrated on other weapons development – in particular, the V-2 rocket and new groundbreaking types of aircraft.

Aircraft must bomb America

In 1942 development took off for new types of groundbreaking aircraft. Germany's best minds turned – on the orders of Luftwaffe commander-in-chief Hermann Göring – to such innovations as developing long-range bombers that could drop a bomb load of around 4.5 tonnes over the US as part of the Amerikabomber project. The main requirement was that these heavy bombers must be able to travel approximately 11,600 kilometres without the need for refuelling – in other words, a return journey to the US.

The aim was to devastate New York, not only in retaliation for German losses but also to tie more US troops into defending their homeland so they couldn't fight in Europe. Nuclear weapons would play a vital role in this project too, as Göring dreamt of being able to send aircraft across the Atlantic with a devastating payload of nuclear bombs. The dream never came close to fruition, partly because it was too expensive to realise when the wartime economy was heading downhill, and because the technical challenges were insurmountable. Neither the Amerikabomber project nor German atomic bombs became anything more than pipe dreams.

On the other hand, Hitler became enamoured with the V-2 programme after its third test launch went by the book. However, the rocket suffered from a rash of teething problems. After the successful test launch in October 1942, five successive rockets failed, either exploding on the pad or crashing shortly after launch.

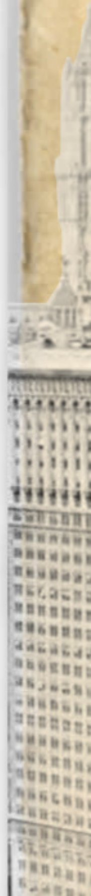
"It took us exactly one half-year to build, and one half-second to blow up," said a despondent von Braun.

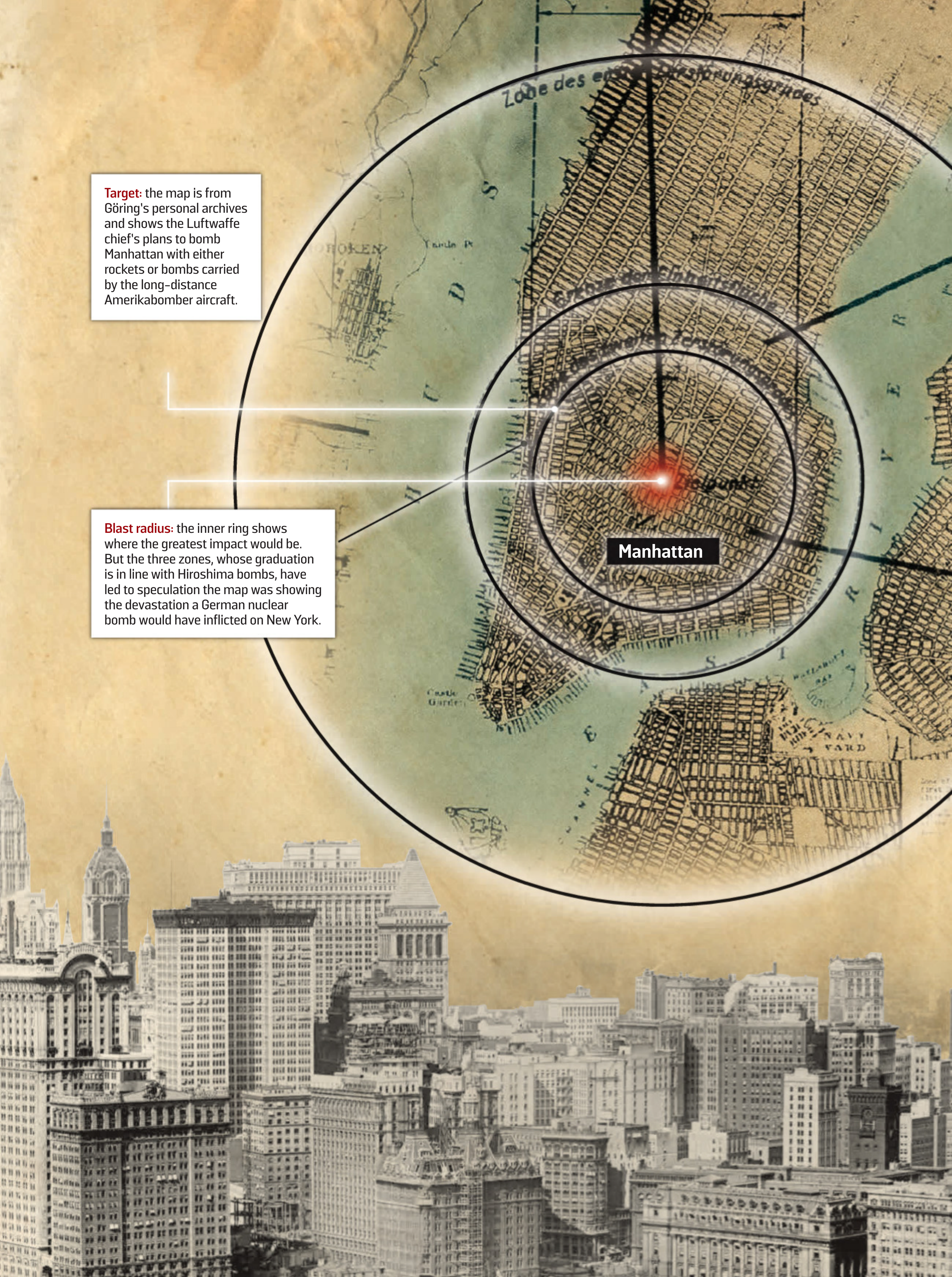
British destroyed the rocket facility

It wasn't until April 1943 that the rocket scientist and his staff succeeded in launching a rocket that could reach the desired range of 270 km – even then, this one went 38 km beyond its stated target.

Engineers worked around the clock to improve the rocket on the Peenemünde base, which had been secretly established in May 1937 on the island of Usedom. But after receiving numerous reports of mysterious flying objects in the sky from – among others – local fishermen, the British sent reconnaissance aircraft over the facility in April 1943, which brought back disturbing images. On the night of 17th-18th August, 1943, Operation Hydra saw 520 RAF bombers drop almost 2,000 tonnes of bombs on to the base.

735 people died in the bombardment; the vast majority were forced labourers from



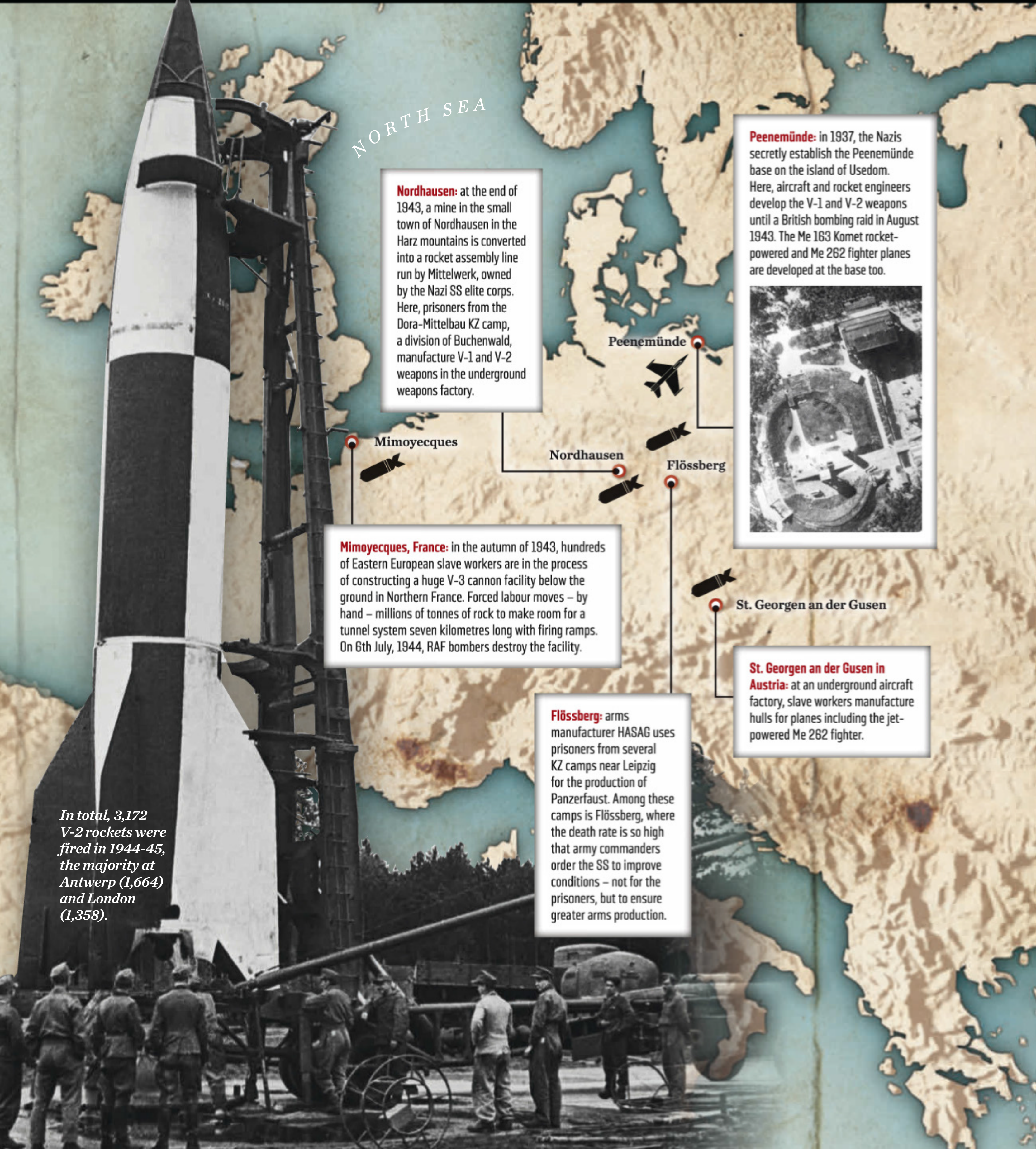


Target: the map is from Göring's personal archives and shows the Luftwaffe chief's plans to bomb Manhattan with either rockets or bombs carried by the long-distance Amerikabomber aircraft.

Blast radius: the inner ring shows where the greatest impact would be. But the three zones, whose graduation is in line with Hiroshima bombs, have led to speculation the map was showing the devastation a German nuclear bomb would have inflicted on New York.

Production took place underground

Forced labourers from KZ camps succumbed to the brutal work of producing the Nazi secret weapons. Production was often carried out in narrow tunnels in underground factories.



Nordhausen: at the end of 1943, a mine in the small town of Nordhausen in the Harz mountains is converted into a rocket assembly line run by Mittelwerk, owned by the Nazi SS elite corps. Here, prisoners from the Dora-Mittelbau KZ camp, a division of Buchenwald, manufacture V-1 and V-2 weapons in the underground weapons factory.

Peenemünde: in 1937, the Nazis secretly establish the Peenemünde base on the island of Usedom. Here, aircraft and rocket engineers develop the V-1 and V-2 weapons until a British bombing raid in August 1943. The Me 163 Komet rocket-powered and Me 262 fighter planes are developed at the base too.

Mimoyecques, France: in the autumn of 1943, hundreds of Eastern European slave workers are in the process of constructing a huge V-3 cannon facility below the ground in Northern France. Forced labour moves – by hand – millions of tonnes of rock to make room for a tunnel system seven kilometres long with firing ramps. On 6th July, 1944, RAF bombers destroy the facility.

Flössberg: arms manufacturer HASAG uses prisoners from several KZ camps near Leipzig for the production of Panzerfaust. Among these camps is Flössberg, where the death rate is so high that army commanders order the SS to improve conditions – not for the prisoners, but to ensure greater arms production.

St. Georgen an der Gusen in Austria: at an underground aircraft factory, slave workers manufacture hulls for planes including the jet-powered Me 262 fighter.

In total, 3,172 V-2 rockets were fired in 1944-45, the majority at Antwerp (1,664) and London (1,358).

Poland and Russia. Just two rocket engineers were among the victims – the brains behind the V-2/A4 programme, von Braun, wasn't hit.

After the bombardment, leading Nazis in consultation with von Braun decided to move production. The Peenemünde base was clearly too vulnerable; instead, they provided a secret underground facility in tunnels at the small town of Nordhausen in Germany's Harz mountains.

The tunnels were the result of many years of mining, and were designated to house a bomb-proof rocket assembly line to be run by Mittelwerk, a factory owned by the Nazi elite SS corps. The SS provided labour to convert the dark and damp underworld for weapons production. Passages required expanding and linking to intersecting tunnels, and a production plant needed setting up. For this purpose, the SS set up the Dora concentration camp, whose inmates would be responsible for carrying out the inhuman work.

By September 1943, thousands of prisoners had arrived at the camp, which quickly gained the reputation of being a hell on earth – *"Die Hölle von Dora"* (The Hell of Dora) as it was known. The prisoners were admitted through a gate and locked into the mine for 12-hour shifts. Here in temperatures of just eight degrees Celsius, they slaved away, wearing only thin, tattered clothes and without ever seeing daylight.

The job of expanding the tunnels to make them ready for rocket production was so physically draining that prisoners quickly succumbed to their harsh environment. The food was lousy, consisting of beet soup, a hunk of bread and rancid margarine. Prisoners crammed into lice-ridden and diarrhea-stained mattresses where they struggled to sleep, and the toilets consisted of oil barrels cut in half with a plank on top.

> While the rockets continued to spew from the underground factory, Germany's brightest [worked] to develop the world's first rocket-powered plane

Under these miserable conditions, many prisoners dropped dead during the middle of their shift. The corpses were stacked in piles in a corner and driven away once a day – some days over 100 bodies were transported to the crematorium. Many of the dead never actually left but were encased in concrete in the hallways, simply because their fellow prisoners didn't have the strength to carry them through the kilometre-long cave system.

Four-storey bunk beds were installed, with virtually no space at the bottom or in the middle, only at the top. Here, prisoners sat wearily between shifts picking lice from their clothes. Excrement on the floor and bodies everywhere prevented prisoners from venturing into the hallways, according to the description afforded by one of the prisoners' diaries.

Handguns | MG 42

PRECISE The gun could hit targets up to 2 km away with its deadly hail of bullets.

DEADLY The German machine gun was considered the war's best and could fire 1,200 bullets per minute.

Rocket-powered plane glided to land

The underground rocket factory was ready for production in December 1943, and just before the turn of the year, the first three V-2 rockets rolled out of the mine. After that, the pace of production was cranked up, and on 20th June, 1944 one of the factory-produced rockets made history when it reached outer space, 176 km above ground level. While the missiles continued to spew from the underground factory, Germany's brightest aircraft engineers were working secretly to develop the world's first rocket-powered plane, the Messerschmitt Me 163B *Komet* (Comet).

As the Soviet armies roared through the east, and while it was increasingly apparent it would just be a matter of time before the Allies planned to deploy the vast forces massing in Britain, Hitler hoped this new wunderwaffe could turn a looming defeat into victory.

In the autumn of 1941, a prototype of the rocket plane had taken to the air for the first time and reached speeds of 1,004 km/h. This made it significantly faster than any other aircraft, including the world's first jet fighter – also German, the Messerschmitt Me 262, which had begun its own test flights in April 1941 and reached 870 km/h.

The Komet was designed for short, swift attacks on enemy bombers high in the air. Since the plane was capable of a climb rate of 4 km/minute, it could whisk through an enemy formation, attack with machine guns and disappear before the enemy could detect the threat.

The plane's Achilles heel was that it literally burned through liquid fuel to reach its top speed, and could only carry two tonnes – enough for around ten minutes flight and no more than three or four attacks.

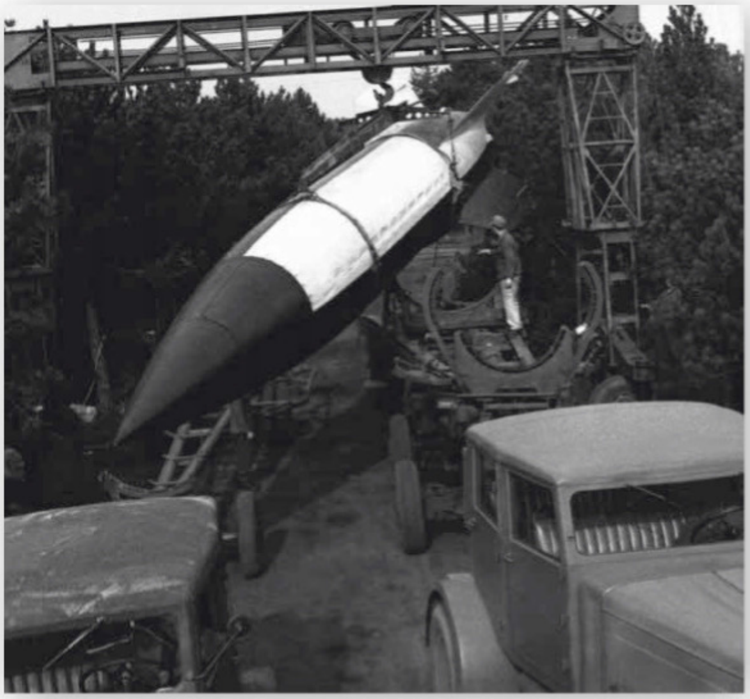
Once the aircraft ran out of fuel, it was forced to glide back to base without power or manoeuvrability, making it an easy target for enemy fighters. Because the Komet jettisoned its wheels after take-off to reduce its weight, the pilot also had to make a belly landing, with the plane sliding over the ground using a skid.

The manoeuvre was risky and required great skill – even then landings went wrong for the seasoned and fearless test pilots. For example, one of the pilots attempted to touch the plane down twice only to find it rise back into the air again. On the third attempt, one wing hit the ground, and the aircraft spun around in a cloud of debris. The pilot didn't survive the failed landing.

Over time, the pilots found a solution to the risky glide back to base: to maintain a speed of around

The devastation of a V-2 strike in London. The rockets struck at random and without warning all over the city.

900 km/h, even without engine power, the pilot dove sharply and flattened out only when it came within range of the base's protective anti-aircraft fire. On 14th May, 1944 the momentous day finally arrived when the rocket plane was ready to be tested in combat for the first time, but pilot Wolfgang Späte, who helped develop the Komet, was forced to abandon the mission. The engine spluttered to a halt just as Späte engaged four US fighters, and although he was able to restart it, the plane was so fast the pilot momentarily lost control and was forced to abort his attack.



A portable V-2 rocket launcher platform is ready for assembly in Belgium, 1944. Preparing the rocket for firing took four to six hours.

Three months later, in August 1944, a Komet succeeded for the first time in shooting down a plane, a US B-17 bomber. Over the following weeks, the Komet scored several more victories, but not without losses: during one glider landing, one of the planes was intercepted and shot down at close range by a Mustang fighter, after which the Komet smashed its nose into the ground costing the pilot his life.

Originally the Luftwaffe ordered over 2,000 rocket aircraft, but by the end of the war only around 370 had been completed. The biggest problem, however, wasn't a lack of planes, but the fact the Allies had bombed the only factory that manufactured the liquid fuel, making it eventually impossible to keep the Komet in the air.

In 1945 the aircraft type became practically inoperable. By that time, statistics show the Komet had been attributed to just nine confirmed shootings of enemy aircraft.

Missile spreads terror

After D-Day, when the Allies landed in Normandy on 6th June, 1944 in history's largest amphibious operation, Hitler turned the screw on the Luftwaffe: he wanted to see V-1 bombs rain over London, now.

The innovative V-2 was not the Germans' only *Vergeltungswaffe* (retaliatory weapon) – aircraft engineers had also developed its little brother, the V-1, which was a flying bomb and history's first cruise missile. Unlike the V-2, the V-1 wasn't rocket-powered, but instead propelled by a pulsating jet engine.

The so-called pulsejet engine pumped fuel into the combustion chamber 47 times per second, just like the heart pumps blood around the body. Inside the chamber, the fuel was mixed with oxygen and ignited to generate an explosion directed backwards through a nozzle to drive the missile forward. Its payload was a one-tonne bomb.

But in January 1944, the Allies launched a massive bombing campaign that destroyed or damaged most of the 96 German V-1 launch bases in northern France, leaving the Luftwaffe with only a few usable bases. By June the V-1 missile still wasn't ready for use, but Luftwaffe general Erich Heinemann, responsible for the missiles, had no choice but to follow orders.

> ❞ The missiles struck indiscriminately, meaning no one felt safe on London's streets.

The general ordered the first salvo to launch on 12th June, 1944 at 23.00, but results were disappointing. Only nine V-1s left their launchers, and all crashed due to engine vibrations before they reached the English coast.

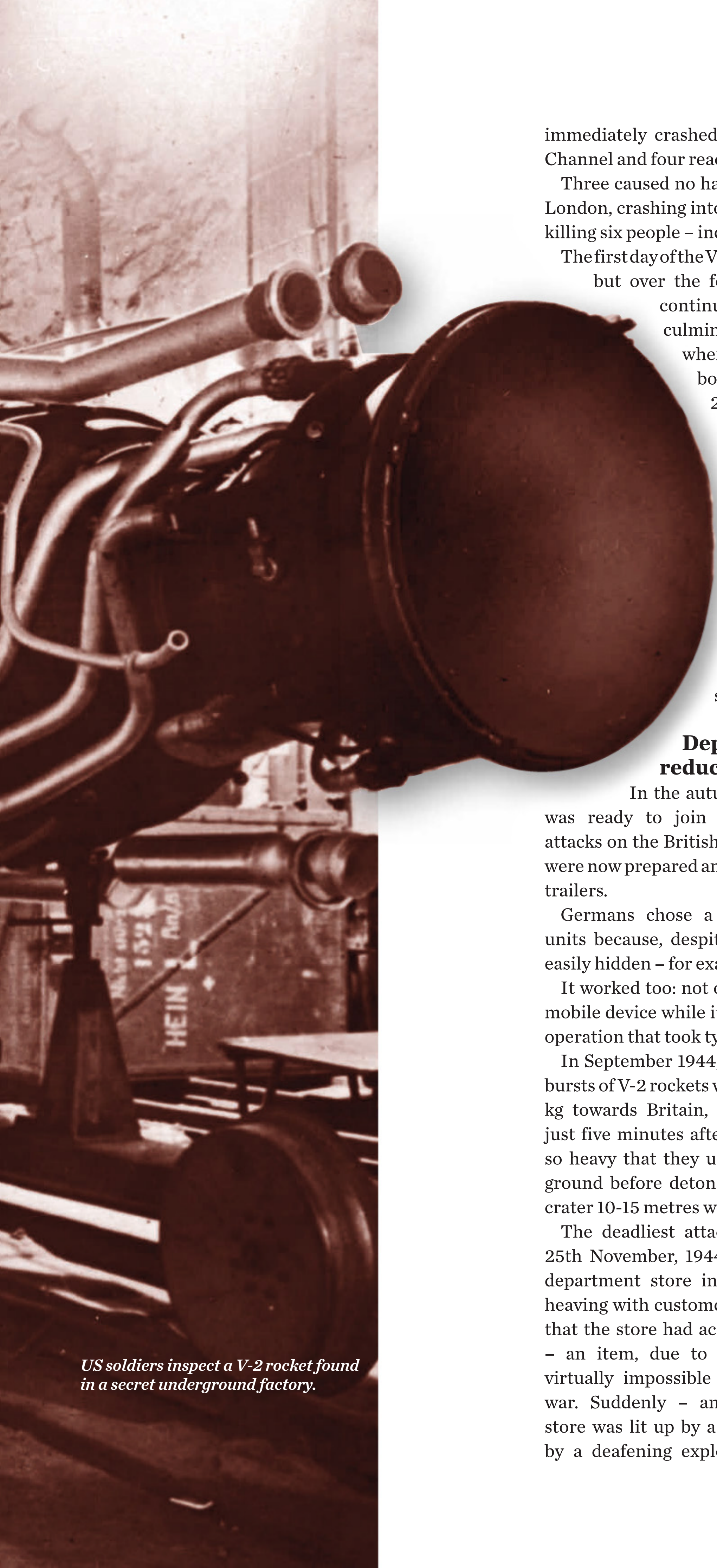
The next volley was fired a few hours later on 13th June at 03.30, but again the success rate was poor. Ten missiles got away, but four

immediately crashed, two disappeared over the Channel and four reached the British mainland.

Three caused no harm, but the final missile hit London, crashing into the Bethnal Green district, killing six people – including one child.

The first day of the V-1 was a disaster for the Nazis, but over the following months, Germany continued its bombardment, which culminated on 3rd August, 1944 when no fewer than 316 flying bombs were fired at Britain, 220 striking London.

In total, the V-1 killed around 5,500 Britons, wounding another 16,000, and although the casualty figures seemed modest through Nazi eyes, the weapon created the terror Hitler had hoped for: the missiles struck indiscriminately, meaning no one felt safe on London's streets.



US soldiers inspect a V-2 rocket found in a secret underground factory.

Department store reduced to rubble

In the autumn of 1944, the V-2 rocket was ready to join the hard-pressed German attacks on the British. The first mobile launchers were now prepared and comprised 32 vehicles and trailers.

Germans chose a strategy involving mobile units because, despite their size, they could be easily hidden – for example, in a forest.

It worked too: not once did the Allies destroy a mobile device while it was preparing rockets – an operation that took typically four to six hours.

In September 1944, the units started to fire off bursts of V-2 rockets with payloads of nearly 1,000 kg towards Britain, where the weapons struck just five minutes after launch. The rockets were so heavy that they usually drilled deep into the ground before detonating. A V-2 typically left a crater 10-15 metres wide and 10 metres deep.

The deadliest attack took place on Saturday 25th November, 1944. At 12.30, the **Woolworths** department store in London's New Cross was heaving with customers after rumours circulated that the store had acquired a stock of saucepans – an item, due to metal shortages, that was virtually impossible to get hold of during the war. Suddenly – and without warning – the store was lit up by a blinding flash, followed by a deafening explosion that blew out all

WOOLWORTHS was a British retail chain founded in Liverpool in 1909. It went bankrupt during the financial crisis of 2008-09 and no longer exists.

Continued on page 86

How did the V-2 rocket work?

Behind the Germans' devastating V-2 rockets lay a groundbreaking technology that founded astrodynamics, which paved the way to the moon. The V-2 defined all the challenges of propulsion, aerodynamics and control that continue to task rocket scientists today.

1: Aerodynamics

Wind resistance was the biggest obstacle

Fear of Nazi Germany's V-2s was primarily due to the fact they couldn't be seen or heard until they landed because the rockets were the first to break the sound barrier with a top speed of 5,400 km/h – over 4.5 times faster than the speed of sound. As a rocket's speed doubles, however, air resistance quadruples, making it exponentially harder to fly faster. Consequently, so-called supersonic speeds, which ballistic rockets can attain, require an aerodynamic design to ensure that the rocket can effectively combat the air resistance.

THE PERFECT DESIGN:

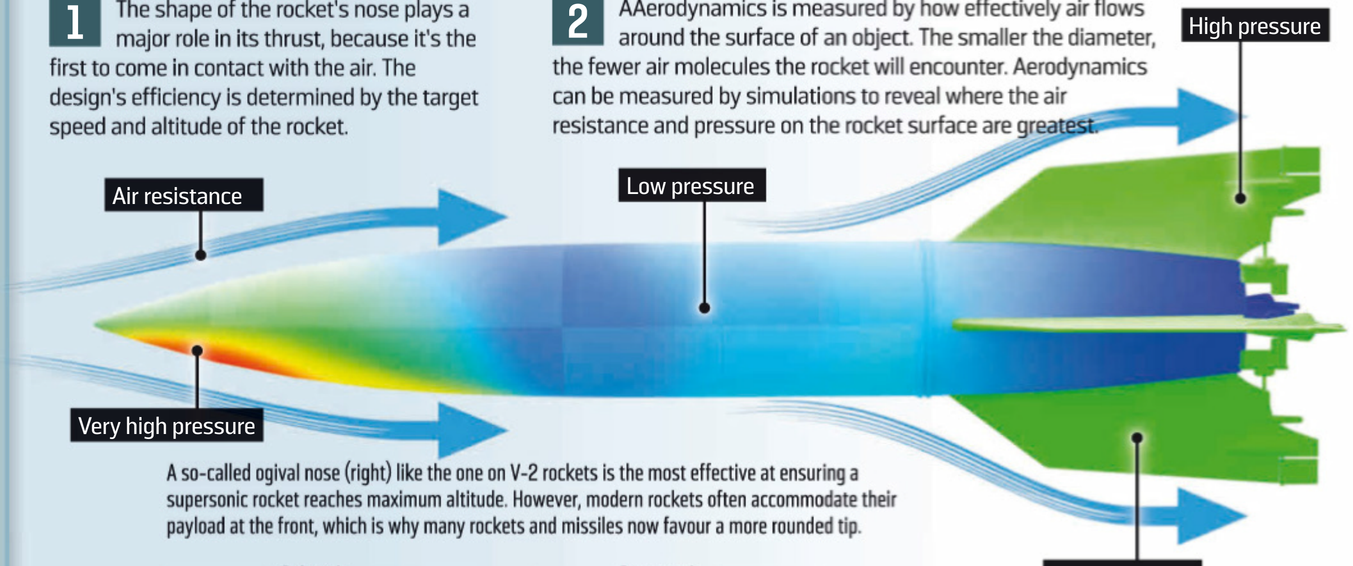
Rocket designers have constructed models of how the most aerodynamic design could look. The so-called Sears-Haack body is a perfect, symmetrical spear shape. In reality, however, a spear-shaped rocket won't work because the shape would be easy to knock off course and there's no room for an engine or exhaust.

Nose is curved

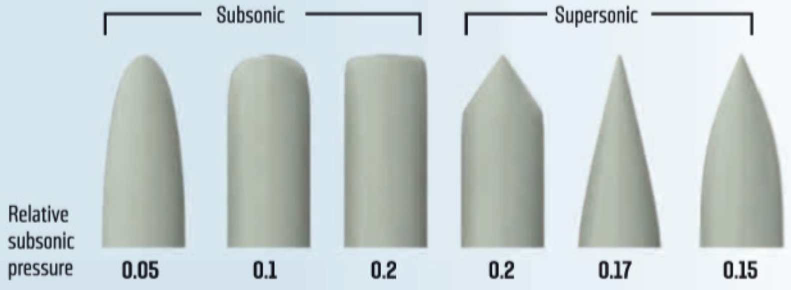
1 The shape of the rocket's nose plays a major role in its thrust, because it's the first to come in contact with the air. The design's efficiency is determined by the target speed and altitude of the rocket.

Diameter must be narrow

2 AAerodynamics is measured by how effectively air flows around the surface of an object. The smaller the diameter, the fewer air molecules the rocket will encounter. Aerodynamics can be measured by simulations to reveal where the air resistance and pressure on the rocket surface are greatest.



A so-called ogival nose (right) like the one on V-2 rockets is the most effective at ensuring a supersonic rocket reaches maximum altitude. However, modern rockets often accommodate their payload at the front, which is why many rockets and missiles now favour a more rounded tip.



Fins provide stability

3 The fins at the base counteract the rocket's roll and create wind resistance to move the centre of pressure – where all aerodynamic forces like lift and drag are concentrated – closer to the rear of the rocket rather than its centre of gravity.

Geometric calculations set targets

During World War II, V-2s primarily targeted large cities like London and Antwerp because they were both easy to hit and within range of the rockets. The rockets landed randomly on streets, alleys, and hit civilian targets, and fear of the V-2s lay primarily in their ability to strike like a bolt from the blue from a distance. Although missiles have subsequently become more advanced and precise than the extremely inaccurate V-2s, they were built on the same science the Germans used to calculate each rocket's trajectory.

ROCKET WITH THE LARGEST RANGE:
The Soviet R-36M (designated SS-18 Satan) is the rocket with the most extended range in history – up to 16,000 km or around two-fifths the circumference of Earth. The R-36M can carry ten warheads, but its range is reduced when fully loaded.

V-2 rocket lifted vertically

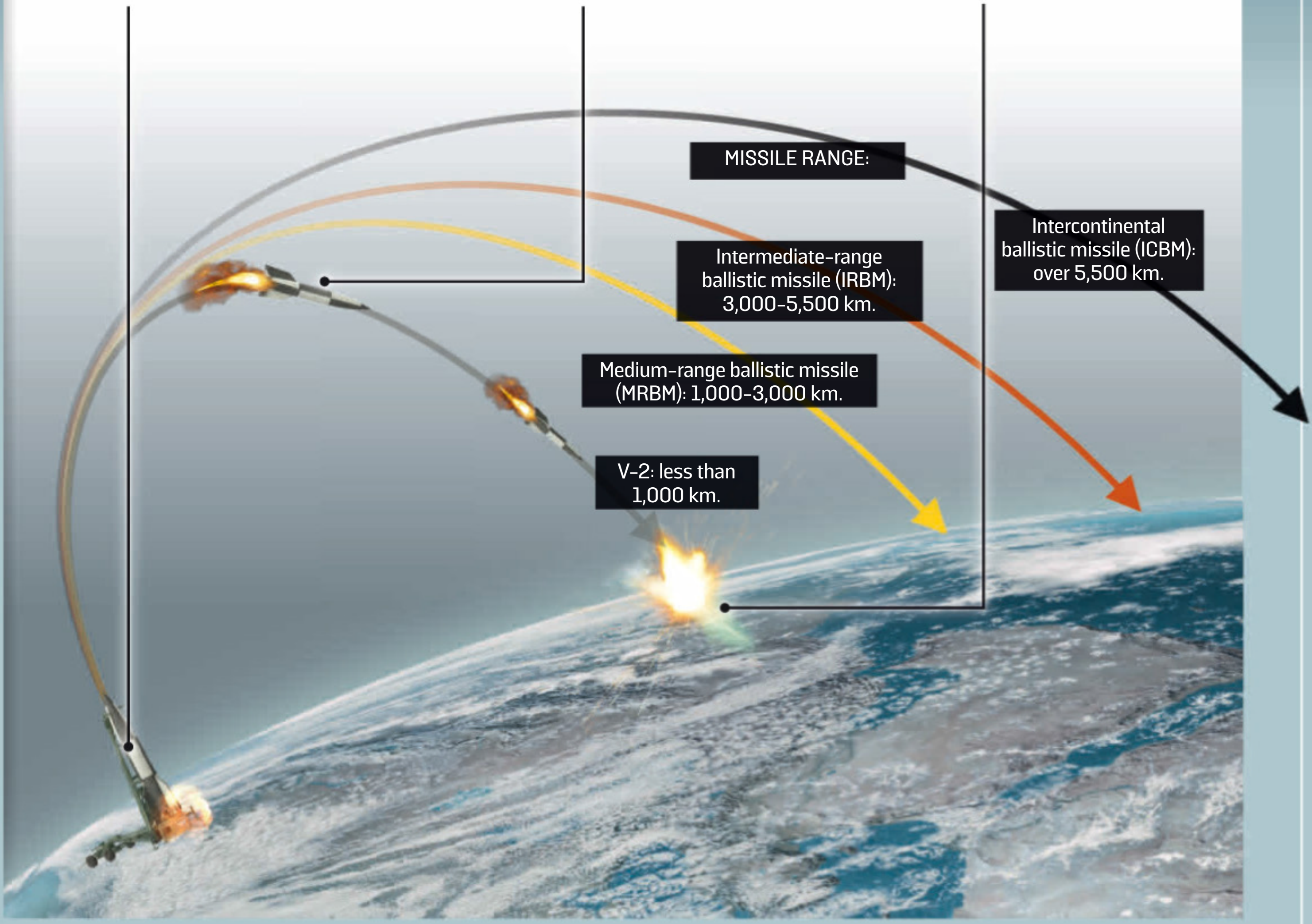
1 The V-2 was a so-called SRBM – short-range ballistic missile – that lifted vertically. After five seconds, the nose turned to an approximately 45-degree angle, and its speed gradually rose to around 5,600 km/h, at which point the engine switched off and the rocket started on its almost perfectly geometric parabolic course.

A yardstick set the course

2 The Germans calculated the approximate point of impact using a scientific discipline known as external ballistics, which required them to know the firing position, target, amount of fuels and Newton's laws of motion. They used a slide rule and compass to direct the missiles to their target. The V-2s reached a maximum height of 90-100 km at the edge of the atmosphere.

Precision was overestimated

3 The measure of a ballistic missile's precision is known as circular error probability (CEP). The idea used the radius of a circle to define how close most rockets came to their intended target. V-2 rockets had a calculated CEP of 4.5-6 km from their target, but in reality many rockets landed 12-17 km away.

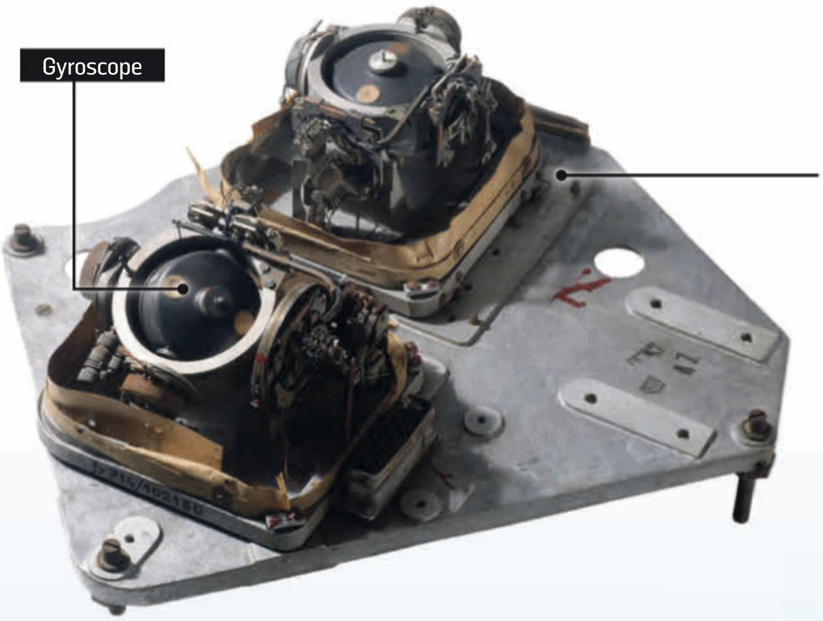

MISSILE RANGE:
Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM): over 5,500 km.
Intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM): 3,000-5,500 km.
Medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM): 1,000-3,000 km.
V-2: less than 1,000 km.

3: Control

Rocket controlled by gyroscope and graphite

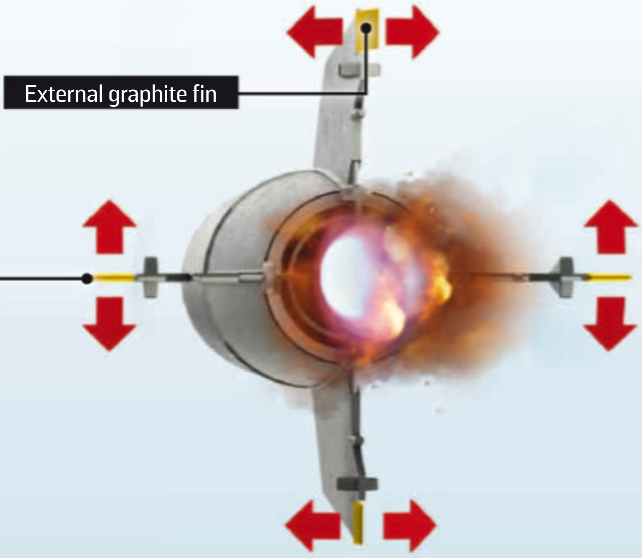
On the modern-day battlefield, GPS and remote-controlled systems are easy to hack or put out of operation. As a result, current missile control isn't dissimilar to the way Germans controlled the V-2. Even now, long-range missiles cannot be controlled remotely once fired; instead, an onboard computer makes sure the rocket hits its target. The V-2s were controlled by a pair of gyroscopes, one controlling the roll and yaw, the other the pitch and tilt. There were also four external rudders and four internal vanes near the exhaust that were able to change direction.

THE MOST ACCURATE MISSILE:
According to official figures, the Indian Agni-V is currently the most precise missile. It can strike within an hour's walking radius of a designated target and can carry nuclear warheads.



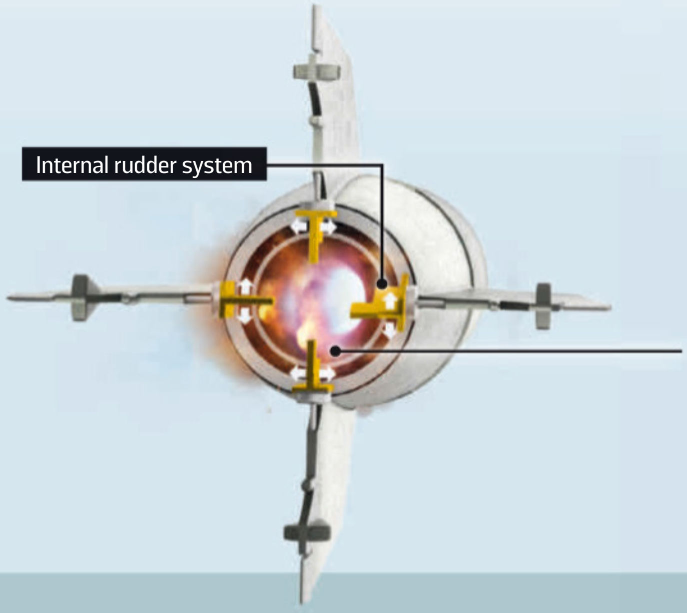
Gyroscope held its course

1 When the V-2 rocket was launched, its inertia-based navigation system helped ensure the rocket held its course. The system wasn't controlled externally, but rather by a built-in gyroscope that kept the rocket vertical plus an accelerometer coupled to a single analogue computer. The gyroscope oriented the rocket along three axes, while the accelerometer cut the fuel supply once the V-2 reached its target speed during ascent.



Graphite fin rotated rocket

2 The liquid fuel in rockets can splash around in the tank and affect its orientation in the same way a person carrying a large water container will feel the influence of the water's movement. These movements were picked up by the gyroscope, which sent signals to four movable fins at the rocket's rear. The fins corrected the fuel's imbalance to ensure it kept on course.



Jet's direction could be changed

3 Another rudder system was revolutionary for controlling the V-2. It comprised four internal vanes inside the rocket's exhaust, made from the heat-resistant carbon material graphite. These fins could change course by altering the direction of the jet. They were used during the ascent where the need for continual adjustments was greatest, ensuring the rocket's trajectory remained locked in place.

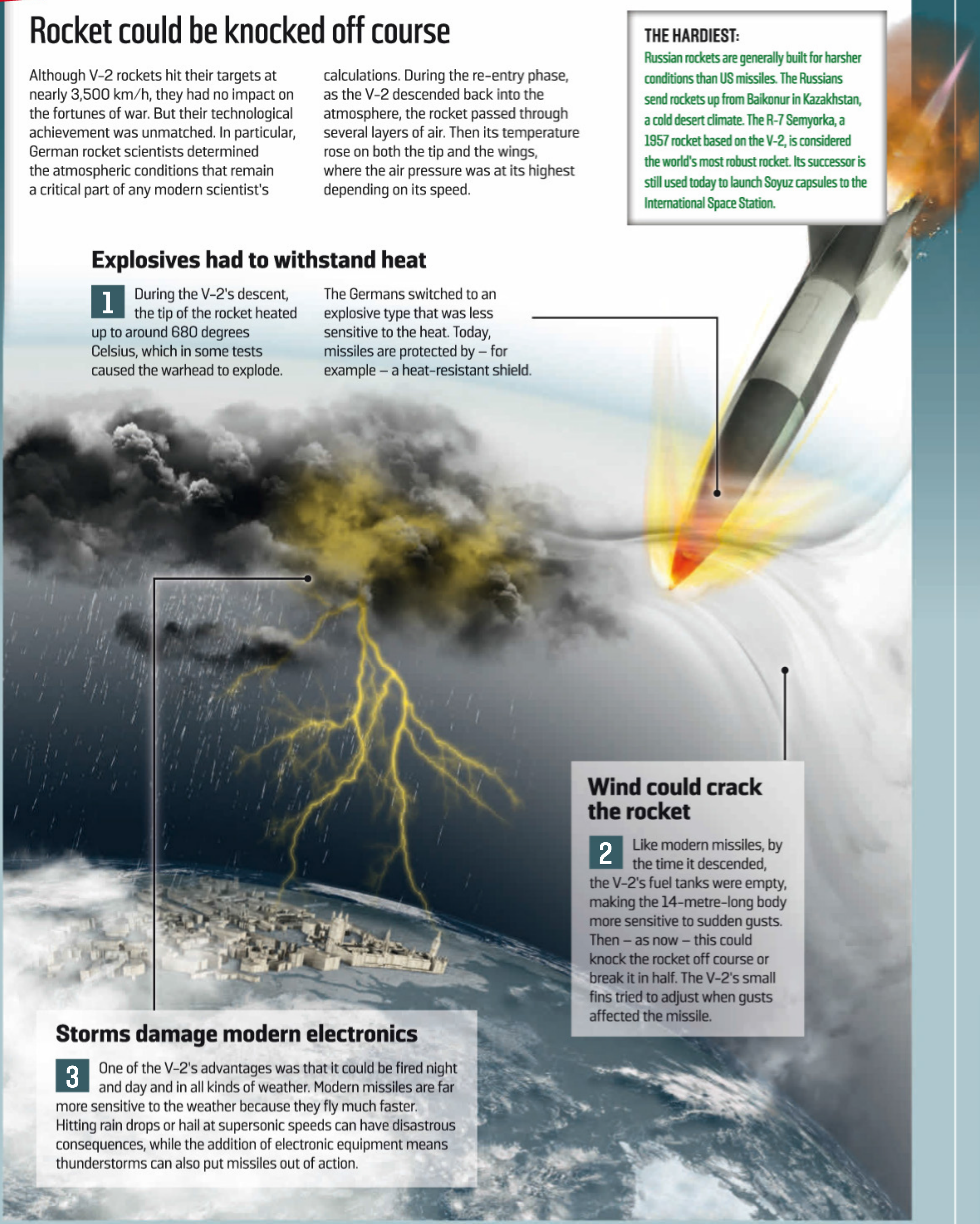
4: Re-entry

Rocket could be knocked off course

Although V-2 rockets hit their targets at nearly 3,500 km/h, they had no impact on the fortunes of war. But their technological achievement was unmatched. In particular, German rocket scientists determined the atmospheric conditions that remain a critical part of any modern scientist's calculations. During the re-entry phase, as the V-2 descended back into the atmosphere, the rocket passed through several layers of air. Then its temperature rose on both the tip and the wings, where the air pressure was at its highest depending on its speed.

THE HARDIEST:

Russian rockets are generally built for harsher conditions than US missiles. The Russians send rockets up from Baikonur in Kazakhstan, a cold desert climate. The R-7 Semyorka, a 1957 rocket based on the V-2, is considered the world's most robust rocket. Its successor is still used today to launch Soyuz capsules to the International Space Station.



Explosives had to withstand heat

1 During the V-2's descent, the tip of the rocket heated up to around 680 degrees Celsius, which in some tests caused the warhead to explode. The Germans switched to an explosive type that was less sensitive to the heat. Today, missiles are protected by – for example – a heat-resistant shield.

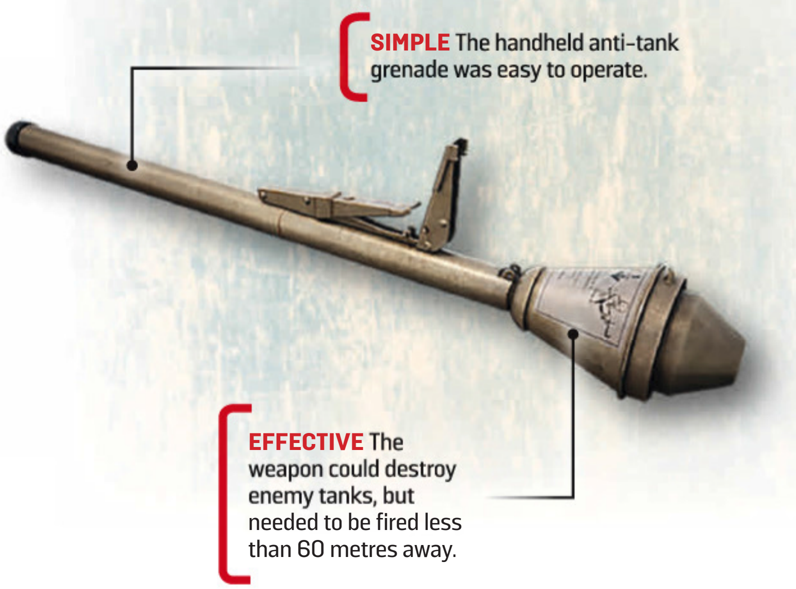
Wind could crack the rocket

2 Like modern missiles, by the time it descended, the V-2's fuel tanks were empty, making the 14-metre-long body more sensitive to sudden gusts. Then – as now – this could knock the rocket off course or break it in half. The V-2's small fins tried to adjust when gusts affected the missile.

Storms damage modern electronics

3 One of the V-2's advantages was that it could be fired night and day and in all kinds of weather. Modern missiles are far more sensitive to the weather because they fly much faster. Hitting rain drops or hail at supersonic speeds can have disastrous consequences, while the addition of electronic equipment means thunderstorms can also put missiles out of action.

Anti-tank gun | Panzerfaust



SIMPLE The handheld anti-tank grenade was easy to operate.

EFFECTIVE The weapon could destroy enemy tanks, but needed to be fired less than 60 metres away.

the windows and caused the entire building to tremble. Before anyone had a chance to escape, the building collapsed into rubble. 168 adults and children were killed and another 123 wounded in the attack, which came literally like a thunderbolt from the blue. There was no warning, and no one had time to see what caused the disaster, but no one doubted who sent the bomb: Germany.

The British immediately knew they were threatened by a new and terrifying weapon that flew faster than the speed of sound, so no one could hear the rockets before they hit. Also, the missiles landed randomly within a range of 20-30 kilometres, and this uncertainty vastly increased the terror effect. In total, the Nazis fired around 1,400 V-2 rockets at southern England, but the new wunderwaffen did not affect the fortunes of war.

> The Germans calculated that once complete, the facility would be able to overwhelm the British capital with a hail of 300 shells per hour.

Supergun had to smash London

German army chiefs knew that only extraordinary means could prevent Germany from losing the war. The Allies were taking control throughout 1944 and time was running out for Nazi Germany, which in the war's final phase had yet another Vergeltungswaffe up its sleeve – or rather dug into the ground: the V-3 cannon, the world's largest and most powerful gun.

The V-3 had to be ready to do what the V-1 and V-2 had failed to: from underground firing ramps in Mimoyecques near the Northern French coast the long-range giant canon would carpet bomb London from around 165 km away with shells.

The inventor of the ultimate terror weapon was German engineer August Cönders, who implemented several revolutionary technologies in his design. Unlike conventional guns, the 130-metre-long V-3 gun barrels contained a series of side chambers with explosive charges that detonated at the exact moment the projectile – a shell – passed by. The pressure from these explosions consistently increased the speed of the shell so that by the time it left the mouth of the barrel it was travelling up to 1,500 metres per second, or 5,400 km/h. German calculations established the momentum should send each shell across the English Channel and reach London with its devastating 30-kg explosive payload.

Another unusual feature of the V-3 gun was that its barrel was smoothbore, designed to fire more 'flyable' shells. Conventional gun barrels featured 'rifling', which spun the projectiles, so their rotation kept them stable in flight. The V-3's highly aerodynamic shells maintained their course with the aid of stabilising fins.

In autumn 1943, hundreds of Eastern European forced labourers began construction of a gigantic V-3 underground facility extending as far as 100 metres below ground in Northern France. The facility was divided into five sections, each with five cannons, all pointing upwards at an angle of approximately 50 degrees with their sights firmly trained on London. The plant was enclosed inside a 5.2-metre concrete 'jacket', protecting against Allied bombs.

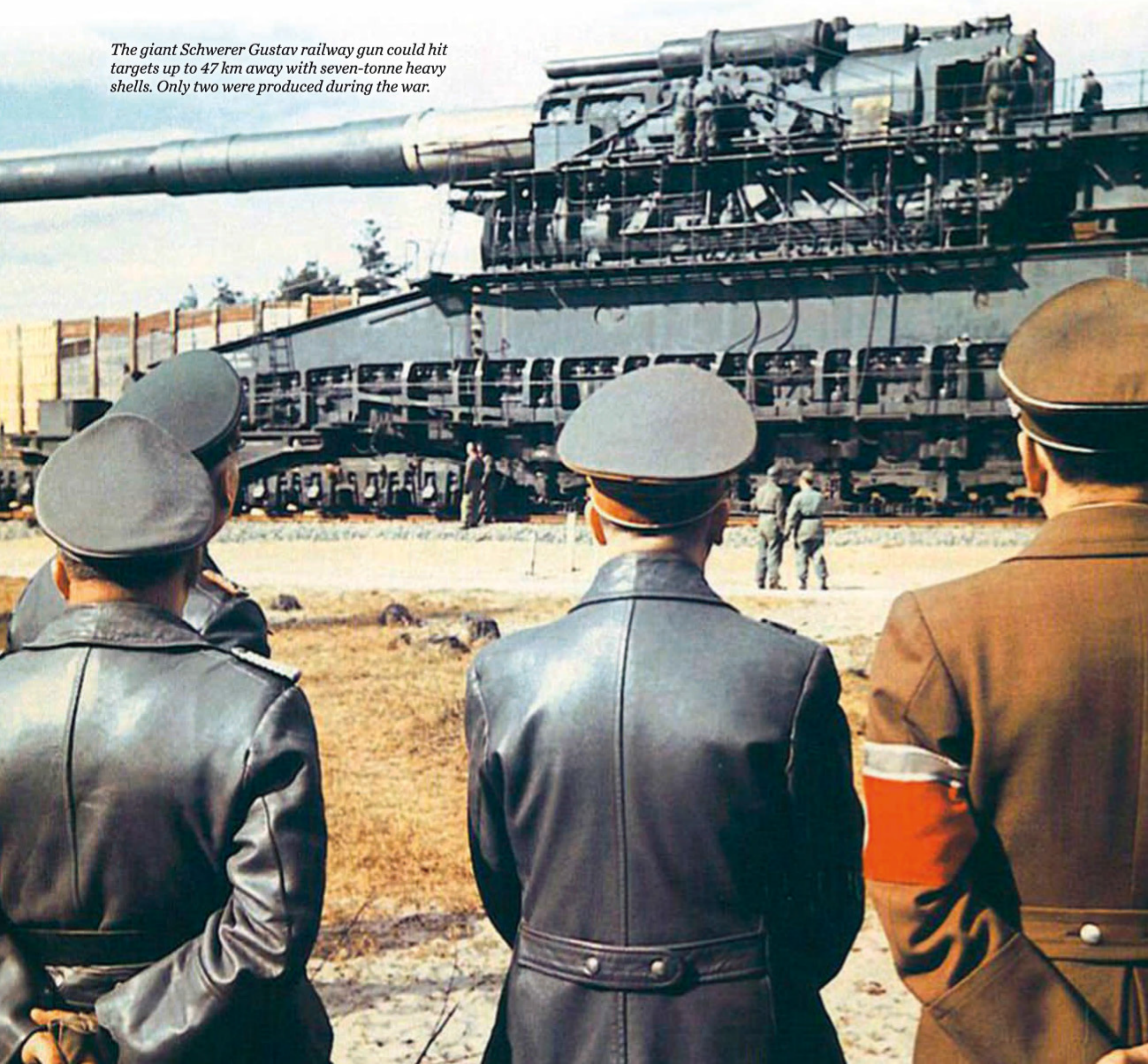
The Germans calculated that once complete, the facility would be able to overwhelm the British capital with a hail of 300 shells per hour, reducing London to rubble in short order. Unsurprisingly, expectations surrounding the supergun were huge: in May 1944 the shells flew around 80 km, around half the distance to London. During the second trial firing on 4th July, 1944 the projectiles moved further into the English Channel, finally losing momentum and crashing into the sea around 93 km from the launch site.

The test results were extremely encouraging for the Nazis, but just two days later they were forced to abruptly abandon all hopes in the V-3 as the wunderwaffen that would ensure the Third Reich's survival. On 6th July, a British squadron bombed the gun facility with recently developed Tallboy bombs that were extremely powerful and weighed around 5,400 kg. Despite its thickness, the concrete canopy couldn't withstand the bombardment: three of the Tallboys burrowed their way 30 metres down where 300 people – mainly slave workers – lost their lives.

The damage was so extensive that the Germans were forced to abandon plans to rebuild the V-3 facility. They continued, however, to develop a simplified version of the gun a mere 50 metres long. From a position just south of the German city of Trier, these V-3 cannons bombarded Luxembourg at the start of 1945, but without much effect.

Hard-hitting 'fist' crushed tanks

At the opposite end of the scale, there is a weapon the German armed forces started using in 1943. To prevent Soviet tanks from rolling unstoppably through the Nazi front lines on the Eastern Front, engineers at the HASAG arms-manufacturing factory in Leipzig invented the *Panzerfaust* (Armoured fist). It was cheap, effective and a handy disposable weapon that was simple to operate and could be used by anyone: soldiers,



The giant Schwerer Gustav railway gun could hit targets up to 47 km away with seven-tonne heavy shells. Only two were produced during the war.

civilians, men, women and children. The Red Army's T-34 tank, which weighed 30.9 tonnes and has been recognised by military historians as the best all-rounder during World War II, constituted a massive threat to the Germans. Its powerful gun and high speed meant the T-34 spread instant panic through German units when the tank roared in, but with the tubular Panzerfaust, the Germans finally had a weapon that could penetrate the tank's thick armour.

The secret behind the weapon's effectiveness was its so-called 'shaped charge', whereby the warhead – a grenade – was fired from a hand-held tube. The shaped charge concentrated the projectile's explosive force into a targeted beam, and the extreme heat generated was capable of penetrating up to 200 mm of steel armour.

Although the weapon was simple, the design marked a decisive breakthrough: with a single shot, one German soldier could put a tank out of action, which was strongly needed when the Germans forces were on the defensive. The Nazi defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943 effectively sealed Germany's fate and was one of the major turning points of the war in Europe.

Anyone could operate a Panzerfaust with just a few minutes of instruction: the shooter held the approximately one-metre-long tube on their shoulder, aimed it at the target and pressed the trigger. If they adhered to the recommended firing range of 30 metres, they would destroy a Soviet tank in just under eight of ten cases. In addition to being extremely effective, the Panzerfaust was also cheap to mass produce – by the end of 1943 HASAG had produced no fewer than 350,000 weapons from its eight factories. Forced labour

KZ prisoners became involuntary guinea pigs

ALTITUDE SICKNESS
To find out how the human body reacts in low-oxygen air – for example, at high altitude – SS doctors conducted a series of experiments on KZ prisoners in Dachau. Prisoners were hung from parachutes in a pressure chamber to simulate pressures at different altitude levels. Some died, and the doctors performed autopsies to observe the reaction of internal organs to pressure changes.

EXTREME COOLING
To improve the survival rates of pilots who crashed into the sea, the Luftwaffe investigated how long a human could survive in ice-cold water. Naked KZ prisoners were placed in tanks of cold water ranging from 2-11 degrees Celsius. The doctors found death occurred when body temperature dropped to 24-25 degrees. In water of 4-6 degrees, a human could survive from 60-90 minutes.

RESUSCITATION
SS chief Himmler believed that so-called animal heat was an effective way to rewarm severely chilled people. Male KZ prisoners with a body temperature of 30 degrees undergoing cardiac arrest were placed between naked female KZ prisoners and brought back to normal temperature. The experiments revealed rapid rewarming – for example in hot baths – was more effective.

was responsible for the weapons' production, and female prisoners from the KZ camp at Leipzig were especially busy. The women had gained the reputation of being faster than the men, and at one of the largest factories, 5,067 of the 5,288-strong forced-labour workforce were female.

The hard-working prisoners died in droves: the job of filling the toxic explosives into the projectile was fatal, and most succumbed to illness after 6-8 weeks, at which point they were executed.

Many also died from hunger and cold, and in the work camp Flössberg near Leipzig, the death toll became so problematic that Army Command ordered the SS, which ran the camp, to improve conditions to ensure a steady supply of weapons. Within two years, HASAG had produced around eight million Panzerfaust, with production reaching its peak in December 1944 when almost 1.3 million weapons left the factories. In April 1944 alone, 172 Soviet tanks were destroyed in close combat with German Panzerfaust shooters. Around every 20th Panzerfaust , however, was a damp squib, and several of the projectiles exploded the moment they fired, killing the shooter on the spot. Another issue was that the black powder propellant gave off a lot of smoke – coupled with the flame that appeared when fired, it made it impossible for the shooter to conceal his position, making him an easy target for the enemy.

Komet fighters were developed to defend German cities against Allied bombers. Theoretically, the rocket planes were a superior weapon, but a lack of fuel made them virtually useless.

Steel monster proved hopeless

Panzerfaust's monstrous contrast was a German super self-propelled gun: the Landkreuzer P.1500 Monster, which made the Soviet T-34 look like a toy. With a planned length of 42 metres and 250-mm steel armour, Monster would have weighed 1,500 tonnes – the equivalent of just over 1,000 large passenger cars.

Four MAN U-boat engines would power the vehicle, the crew comprising over 100 men. The plan was that the monster howitzer would provide a platform for an 800-mm Schwerer Gustav railway gun, the most powerful weapon ever used in combat. Previously, Germany's supergun had been transported on custom-built military trains, but in 1942 Hitler approved work on putting the steel monster into action.

The Führer greenlit the ambitious project because intelligence revealed the Soviets were

Most of the brains behind Germany's rocket programme ended up working for the US after the war - including Wernher von Braun (shown with arm in plaster) whose work and knowledge proved crucial to the Americans' attempt to land a man on the Moon.

developing heavier tank types, and Hitler wanted to respond with a tank that was bigger and heavier than anything the enemy could deploy.

The world's largest supergun didn't even reach the prototype stage. Engineers repeatedly warned Hitler that its size meant the steel monster would prove useless on the battlefield, and in 1943 Minister of Armaments Albert Speer put an end to the monstrous project. Its extreme weight meant the P.1500 Monster would have been unable to go faster than 10-15 km/h – a snail's pace that was of little use in a modern war. The juggernaut would have been hopeless because it would have been unable to drive on roads without destroying the surface or crossing a bridge without collapsing it.

Invisible planes were pioneering

With Nazi Germany's downfall fast approaching, two brothers worked 24/7 in early 1945 to finalise a groundbreaking new aircraft, the world's first stealth plane.

REIMAR AND WALTER HORTEN

Two German aviation enthusiasts who – without formal aviation training – developed some of the war's most revolutionary aircraft types in the 1940s.

Both **Reimar and Walter Horten** had been passionate about aircraft since childhood, particularly the idea of developing a 'flying wing', a tail-less plane where the body and wing were one. And in 1934 their efforts were recognised when the brothers' Ho I unpowered flying wing won the annual glider championship. They then built a motorised model of the flying wing, Ho II, which was ready for flight in 1935. The aircraft was built from wood and lightweight metal and could fly for longer than conventional aircraft types, but the Horten brothers' career peak still lay ahead. In mid-1943, Hermann Göring sent out a call to the Nazi aircraft industry. Göring demanded engineers develop a combat plane that could be loaded with 1,000 kg of bombs and fly 1,000 km with a top speed of 1,000 km/h.

The Horten brothers were already building such an aircraft in the shape of the bat-like jet plane, the Ho 229, which could outrun enemy fighters, and – in a revolutionary move – evade radar.

Recognising that radar could make the difference between victory and defeat, Reimar Horten had been experimenting for several years with way to make aircraft invisible. He designed a chassis where the large wing with built-in cockpit was set at an angle that would deflect radar waves off to the side rather than back to the radar. He also envisaged painting the aircraft with a mix of sawdust and coal dust, which he believed would absorb the radar waves to stop them reflecting back from the aircraft's jet engines and steel parts. Horten presented his sketches to Göring, who was impressed

"Do it. Make it and let me see it," he exclaimed, demanding the aircraft be finished in six months.

But technical challenges kept delaying the project, and it wasn't until 18th December, 1944 that a prototype of the 'invisible' plane went into the air for the first time. But during a test flight of an improved version on 18th February, 1945, disaster unfolded before the eyes of a crowd of horrified spectators. As one engine cut out, the pilot tried to extend the landing gear, but the manoeuvre failed. The plane went into a spin and the pilot was thrown from the cockpit and died.

The tragedy was a crushing setback to the Horten brothers' – and Germany's – hopes. In January 1945 the Red Army had began a major offensive through Poland and south-east Europe, while the Allies headed for Germany from the west.

The Ho 229 was abandoned and never again took to the skies under its huge wing; on 8th May, 1945, just three weeks later, Nazi Germany surrendered. Despite the efforts of numerous aircraft and rocket engineers to develop innovative wunderwaffen for the Third Reich, the war had been lost. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

German rocket research was groundbreaking

- The Germans built the **world's heaviest tank**, the 188-tonne Maus. However, it never saw action because the steel monster was too weighty.
- The Komet was the first aircraft in the world to fly at **over 1,000 km/h**. At the same time, it was history's first functional jet fighter.
- The V-2 rocket paved the way for intercontinental ballistic missiles and modern rockets **including the Saturn rockets that sent humans to the Moon.**

20,000

forced labourers lost their lives during the production of the V-2 rocket. That's four times the number of people killed by the rockets' impact.

WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

How far did Hitler get with his atomic bomb?

1

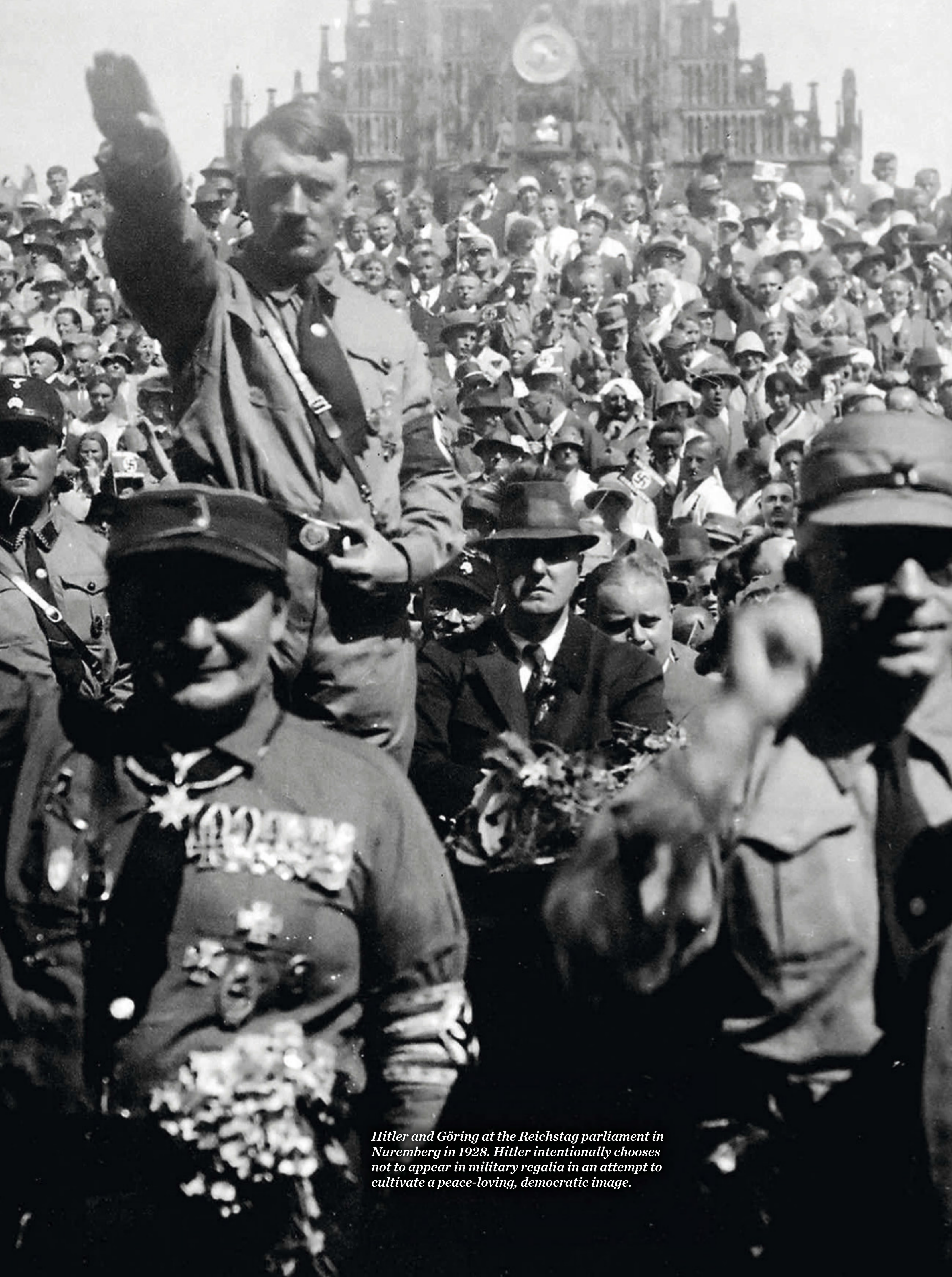
Some historians have estimated that Germany would have possessed a fully functional atomic bomb in 1946 if the war had been drawn out. Researchers are still unsure just how far the Nazis reached in their efforts to produce a nuclear bomb, but point to recently declassified intelligence reports that indicate the Germans performed a nuclear test in 1944.

The report, prepared by US and British intelligence officers in 1944–47, contains several testimonies about the possible test. These include a statement from German test pilot and flak rocket expert Hans Zinsser who saw a mushroom cloud below him during a flight over Ludwigslust in northern Germany in October 1944:

"Strong electrical disturbances and the impossibility to continue radio communication as by lightning, turned up," he said.

A similar observation followed by another pilot who flew over the same area an hour later. The report, which also contained interviews with four German scientists, had been kept since World War II at The National Archives in Washington, DC. It concludes that Hitler's scientists did not reach their goal of building an operational nuclear weapon since they never discovered how to start the chain reaction required to trigger an explosion.

In August 1945, the Americans stood ready with the world's first atomic bomb. The bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on 6th August.



Hitler and Göring at the Reichstag parliament in Nuremberg in 1928. Hitler intentionally chooses not to appear in military regalia in an attempt to cultivate a peace-loving, democratic image.

THE PATH TO POWER

Seduced by propaganda, violence and glittering promises, the Germans elected Hitler into power and gave him a mandate to change the world. How an entire nation could have fallen for his charms is still a wonder, but the reasons lie in the economic crisis and a longing for German grandeur.

The low winter sun shone over the Reich Chancellery when Adolf Hitler stepped out of the building as Germany's new **chancellor**. Just a couple of years earlier, he was viewed as an upstart – one, that the political elite looked upon with contempt: the "Bohemian corporal" as the nation's president Paul von Hindenburg had once dismissively called him. But now – after the election on 30th January, 1933 – the roles were reversed and Hindenburg swore in the corporal as the country's new leader.

Wearing a top hat and a diplomatic coat, Hitler stood in the sharp winter light – ready to take on the role of statesman and the title of chancellor. At the Hotel Kaiserhof, just opposite the Reich Chancellery, a crowd of supporters waited to celebrate the event. Hitler beamed with joy and pride. When he stepped forward to meet the crowd gathered in the hall, an eye witness claimed that tears shone in his eyes.

The tributes continued into the evening as 25,000 members of the militia party Sturmabteilung (SA) marched singing through the Brandenburg Gate. The flames from their torches glinted on their polished boots and flashed off German flags. In front of the Reich Chancellery, the crowd waited, then came the expected chorus: "Sieg Heil!"

As the cries rose in strength, Hitler stepped into one of the lit up windows and raised his arm in reply to the greeting.

Throughout the country – from Flensburg in the north to Munich in the south – the residents tuned in wireless sets to follow the events, transmitted directly from Berlin. Hitler's election as chancellor would be the only broadcast that night, the Nazi propaganda star, Joseph Goebbels, was used to pulling strings at the state's radio station.

All Germans needed to know that something new was about to happen. Hitler was going to do away with the old rule which, in his opinion, consisted "of stupidity, of mediocrity, of half-heartedness, of cowardice, of weakness, and of inadequacy". Germany would put aside poverty and the humiliation that had followed World War I.

> ” As the cries rose in strength, Hitler stepped into one of the lit up windows and raised his arm in reply to the greeting.

Protected by his mother

Hitler himself could hardly believe that the momentous day had finally arrived. After 14 years of political endeavour – the last four years of which had been spent fighting a marathon election campaign – he had finally come to power. As Goebbels wrote in his diary that evening. "It is almost like a dream – a fairy tale. The

CHANCELLOR
The head of the German government has traditionally been called chancellor. The formal name today is Federal Chancellor, but from 1871 to 1945 it was Chancellor.

Hitler was one of the first leaders to use radio to spread his message beyond public meetings and rallies.

new [Third] Reich has been born. Fourteen years of work have been crowned with victory. The German revolution has begun!"

Nobody could have predicted that Adolf Hitler would end up as Germany's leader when he entered the world in the town of Braunau am Inn in northern Austria, on 20th April, 1889. His father, Alois Hitler, was a strict, strait-laced customs officer, whose rather limited ambitions for his son were completely out of synch with young Hitler's lofty dreams. This incompatibility was the source of endless friction in the household, with the son never missing a chance to tell his father that he would never be locked-up in a customs office, but would enjoy the free life of an artist.

Hitler's mother, Klara, focused less on her son's upbringing and behaviour and more on nurturing him and tending to his needs, which fostered a closer relationship between the pair. When Hitler was five, his family moved to Linz where he went to school. As a child, he was deemed to be gifted, but lazy. He found it hard to make friends and he tried to avoid school whenever possible.

The Nazis used symbols to identify themselves and spread their influence. Even the military Iron Cross had a swastika engraved on to it.

His mother allowed him to leave school at 16, without taking his exams. His father had died two years earlier, so there was nobody to keep him at his studies. Instead, Hitler spent his time daydreaming, drawing, painting and visiting the opera. He was especially fond of Richard Wagner's tragedies.

Painting in Vienna

Aged 18, Hitler went to Vienna – a magnificent metropolis in the early 1900s – to pursue his artistic ambitions.

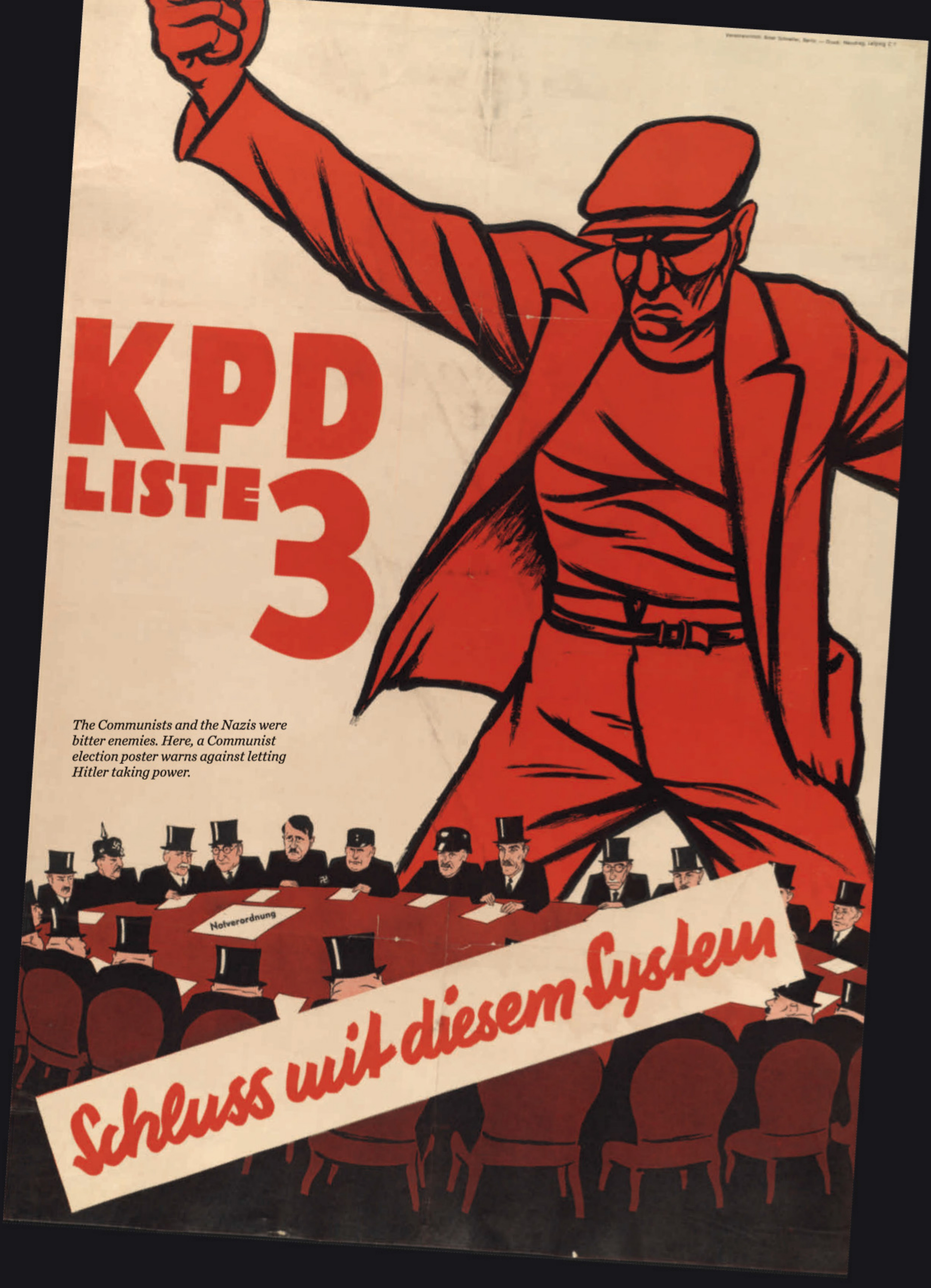
In the Viennese streets, people from across the vast Austro-Hungarian empire met. Austrians, Hungarians, Poles and Slavs mixed freely. Art, culture and architecture flourished. Young Hitler was thrilled by the city's vibrancy and spent hours admiring the monumental architecture. He was also a diligent attendee at the city's opera.

After twice failing the Academy of Fine Arts' entrance exam, Hitler was told that he was unsuitable to be a painter, but that he might be an architect. However, his failure to graduate from school blocked that path. With his ambitions in ruins, he drifted, living on the fringes of society.

During this period, he began to see another side of Vienna – the tensions between the different peoples, the smouldering dissatisfaction among workers and students, and the feeling that the old empire would soon collapse.

Although he was not in financial distress – he received state benefits following the death of his mother – Hitler was frustrated. He felt neglected and side-lined by society. Fuelled by the misery he witnessed in the homeless shelters where he now lived, his sense of ostracism grew and, like many others, he began to blame the Jews for his personal failures. For him, the anti-Semitic pamphlets – which were widely circulated in Vienna at the time – had it right: the Jews were uniting in a bid to destroy Austria; they used propaganda to destroy the workers' loyalty to the Fatherland and luring them instead into international Marxism. Hitler became obsessed by the Jews' alleged complicity in the identity crisis of the German people.

"For only in the brain of a monster, and not that of a man, could the plan of this organisation take shape whose workings must finally bring about the collapse of human civilization and turn this world into a desert waste", he later wrote.


KPD
LISTE
3
Notverordnung
Schluss mit diesem System

The Communists and the Nazis were bitter enemies. Here, a Communist election poster warns against letting Hitler taking power.

KARL LUEGER was an Austrian politician and mayor of Vienna. He founded the Austrian Christian Social Party, which was known for its populist and anti-Semitic views.

Hitler's anti-Semitism was not unusual at the time. Vienna's mayor, **Karl Lueger,** combined improved social care with nationalism and anti-Semitism – a similar recipe to Nazism. Lueger was a talented speaker and had a special ability to reach the man in the street with simple messages.

Through Lueger, Hitler became politicised and was inspired by the mayor's rhetorical techniques. The Social Democratic Party, which Hitler otherwise abhorred, was also a source of inspiration. He admired its marches and the way it could mobilise the masses with effective propaganda.

> The Social Democratic Party, which Adolf Hitler otherwise abhorred, was also a source of inspiration. He admired its marches and the way it could mobilise the masses.

War destroyed Hitler's artistic dreams

Demoralised by Vienna and the city's cosmopolitan disorder, Hitler travelled to Munich in Germany. There, he tried to revive his dreams of becoming a professional artist, but war was about to intrude. On 1st August, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia, and World War I became a reality.

Hitler entered military service and joined the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment. After just under ten weeks of training, the regiment was sent to the Western Front and was immediately thrown into the Battle of Ypres in October 1914 – one of World War I's earlier bloody battles.

Eyewitnesses have revealed how the young, untrained Germans, full of confidence and with linked arms, went straight at the British while singing patriotic songs. The British, however, were rather more prepared and the Germans suffered huge losses. Despite the horror, Hitler described the war as "the most unforgettable and greatest time in my earthly life". He felt at home among the soldiers' ranks and in the battle.

Hitler was at the front for four years. He was awarded the Iron Cross twice during that time, including a first-class award in 1918, which was unusual for a corporal. He was considered a likeable loner by his fellow soldiers. He could be completely lost in his own world at times, then give long explanations about military strategy – something his comrades found inappropriate. During one of the last British mustard gas attacks, Hitler was blinded and had to be hospitalised. There, he learned of Germany's surrender. The message came as a shock to Hitler, who – according to his own writings – threw himself on his bed, buried his head in his pillow and cried.

After the war, Hitler sought refuge in the barracks of his regiment in Munich, where he tried to come to terms with what had happened. The German kaiser had abdicated and Germany had been transformed into a republic. But the democratic system was weak from the beginning, threatened by members of the officer corps and regular uprisings.

Hitler felt a strong hatred of the "November criminals", the politicians whom he believed had undermined Germany's fighting power and forced the country to capitulate. His thoughts revolved around revenge and the restoration of German honour.

In September 1919, he was given an unexpected opportunity to act on his feelings: serving as an intelligence officer, he was tasked with watching the small, nationalist group *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party). Hitler quickly abandoned his role as an observer and eagerly entered the political discussions. A month later, he had joined the party, taking over responsibility for its membership and propaganda. The work gave Hitler renewed confidence, and he discovered his talents as a public speaker. His diatribes against the Jews and communists and their supposed betrayal of the German people

Continued on page 100

The first ... ministerial post | 1933

Power was secured in two months

On 30th January, 1933, the new German coalition government, led by Adolf Hitler, was formed. Going by the name of the Reich Cabinet of National Salvation, the Nazis led the country together with the conservative German National People's Party. Although it was the Nazis first time in government, they made sure they got the pick of top ministerial posts, including Minister of Interior, which was awarded to one of Hitler's most loyal supporters: Wilhelm Frick. By controlling this ministry, the Nazis were able to take charge of the police and soon Nazis were working side by side with officers in the streets. Two months later, Hitler banned the Communist Party and secured absolute power through a number of special laws.

Hitler with the leader of the Nazi ministers, including Reich Commissioner of Aviation Hermann Göring, on the left.

Brownshirts in the SA were the Nazi party's street fighters whose tasks included intimidating political opponents.

From 1919 to 1934

ENEMIES WERE REMOVED ONE BY ONE

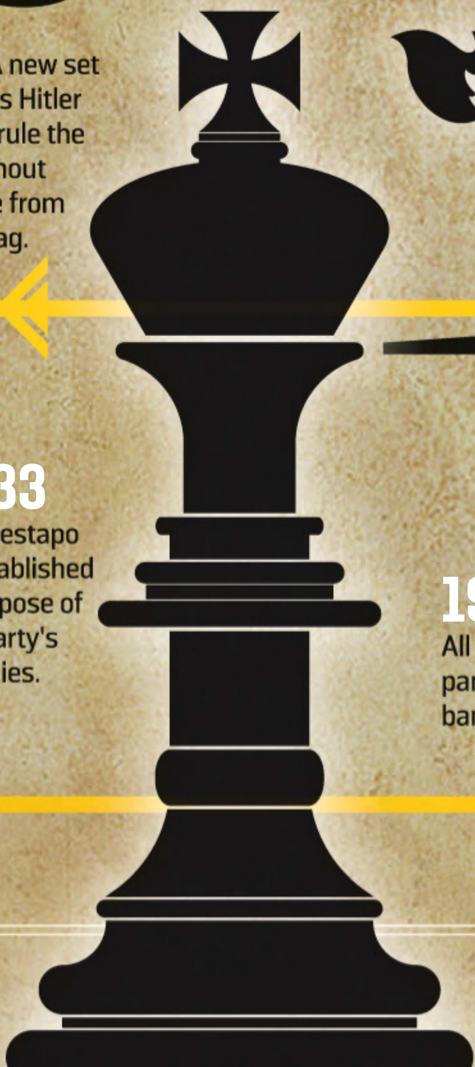
In 15 years, Hitler succeeded in securing the power of his own party, rising to the top of Germany's political hierarchy, removing all his enemies and finally establishing himself as the sole ruler of Germany.

1919 Adolf Hitler becomes a member of the German Workers' Party – the forerunner of the Nazi Party.

1921 After an internal dispute, Hitler takes control of the political group – which is renamed the Nazi Party – and assumes the title of Führer.

1923 Hitler tries to overthrow Germany's government and seize power during the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. The coup fails and Hitler is imprisoned.

1933 A new set of laws gives Hitler the right to rule the country without interference from the Reichstag.



1933 The Gestapo is established to dispose of the party's enemies.

1933 All other political parties are banned.

1924 Hitler spends nine months in prison. He uses the time to write his autobiography *Mein Kampf*.

1929-30 An economic crisis rocks the world. The Great Depression boosts support for the Nazi party.

1930 The Nazi Party secures 18.3 percent of the votes for the Reichstag parliament and becomes Germany's second largest party. Two years later, the party receives 37.4 percent of the votes and becomes Germany's largest party.

1933 The Reichstag fire breaks out. Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe is blamed. Hitler takes the opportunity to ban the Communist Party, thus ensuring the Nazis have a majority in the Reichstag. In new elections in March, the Nazis get 44 percent of the votes.

1933 President Hindenburg names Hitler as Germany's chancellor.

1934 President Hindenburg dies. Hitler combines the posts of chancellor and president and assumes all the powers as Germany's Führer.

1934 During the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler eliminates the leaders of the SA, including his biggest rival, Ernst Röhm. The purge of the Brownshirts' commanders secures Hitler's position.

resonated with many. People cheered and the atmosphere was electric when Hitler unleashed his fury in passionate tirades about the Versailles peace treaty and Germany's economic decline. The party's membership rose steadily and by 1920, Hitler could pull in a crowd of 2,000 people for one of his fiery public addresses.

Shortly afterwards, the party changed its name to the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (the Nazi party) and took the swastika as its emblem.

Hitler's attempted coup

In 1921, Hitler, who had now become the party leader, started to put Nazi followers in uniform, which initially consisted of armbands, badges and flags. He also created the SA Corps, which to attracted sympathisers and intimidated opponents.

> Hitler found a receptive audience in the courtroom – even among the judges, who accepted his motives and praised his patriotism

Conflict over the Ruhr area – which France and Belgium had occupied in response to Germany defaulting on reparation payments agreed after World War I – alongside galloping inflation weakened the Weimar Republic, and local uprisings flared.

Hitler had seen how Benito Mussolini had seized power in Italy in 1922 when his party soldiers, the Blackshirts, marched on Rome. The regime in Germany was no more stable than the one overthrown by Il Duce, and Hitler concluded that a similar march against Berlin might prove equally effective.

The future Führer's first step was a coup in the Bavarian capital, Munich. On the evening of 8th November, 1923, Hitler stormed into Bürgerbräukeller, a large beer hall in the city, fired his gun into the air and declared that a national revolution had broken out. However, he had not secured sufficient political support and during the night, the Bavarian authorities secured the city against a Nazi takeover.

The following day, Hitler – believing victory was assured – marched his men through the city. However, at the centre, in Odeonsplatz square the marchers were greeted by the Bavarian police who opened fire and killed 14 Nazis. Hitler had miscalculated – a Nazi revolution was misjudged.

Instead, he was arrested and tried for high treason. Hitler pleaded innocent, arguing that it was the authorities who were the traitors; he himself had been acting in the best interests of the nation.

Hitler found a receptive audience in the courtroom – even among the judges, who accepted his motives and praised his patriotism. They still found him guilty and sentenced him to five years; he was released after nine months for good behaviour.

Hitler was forced to accept that he needed to work within the law in order to take power. He began rebuilding the Nazi party, which had virtually disintegrated during his absence. His trial, however, had given him a certain level of fame and won over new supporters, meaning he could still draw crowds for his blazing public addresses. Occasionally, he crossed the line and he was banned from speaking in parts of Germany.

But he could still speak at private assemblies, and he spent much of 1925-1928 reorganising the party, which had branches throughout the country. At the same time, Hitler recruited useful people to the cause, including Joseph

Nazi political opponents

COMMUNISTS

Under the leadership of Ernst Thälmann, the German Communist Party was the Nazi Party's sworn enemy. Often the two groups fought in the streets, and bitterly opposed each other in the Reichstag. The Communists were the country's third largest party. The Communists were also involved in an irreconcilable struggle against the Social Democrats.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

The Social Democratic Party was Germany's largest party until the Nazis overthrew them in the 1932 and 1933 elections. The party saw itself as a worker's party with democratic roots and it tried to guard against both left- and right-wing extremists. Despite its size, the party was never given the political power of the chancellor's office by President Hindenburg.

CENTRE

The Catholic Centre Party included left- and right-leaning politicians. As a result, it could work with any government and was a party to all potential coalitions from the end of World War I until Hitler's takeover in 1933. The party tried to create a broad a government as possible, but its efforts in doing so were unsuccessful in most cases.

Did Hitler kill anyone personally?

Hitler was responsible for the death of many millions of people, but did he ever kill someone himself? It's hard to know the answer for sure, but evidence suggests that Hitler avoided personal violence where possible.

MYTH IN BRIEF

Although Hitler was responsible for the deaths of millions of people through war and inhuman acts of persecution, he never killed anyone personally. This stubborn theory is still propounded today.

Hitler, in all likelihood, killed at least one person: himself.

As far as we know, Hitler never killed anyone during his time as German chancellor and leader of the Third Reich, from 1933 to 1945. Although Hitler's tantrums were legendary, there is nothing to suggest that he was physically violent. On the contrary, several sources – including his private secretary, Traudl Junge – say that Hitler, as a private person, was generally quiet and easy going.

It's possible, of course, that he killed enemy soldiers during his military service in World War I. Hitler worked mainly as a courier, but was at the front at several points. The 1914–1918 conflict, however, was a trench war – soldiers rarely stood face to face with the enemy. So if Hitler killed anyone there, it's unlikely he knew anything about it.

Historians cannot state with any certainty, therefore, that Hitler killed anyone. In 1931, however, the German dictator was involved in a case which was never satisfactorily resolved: On 19th September, Hitler's half-niece Geli Raubal was found dead in his apartment in Munich. The official story was that she had shot herself with Hitler's pistol. Geli had been living with Hitler since 1929, and he had become obsessed with her.

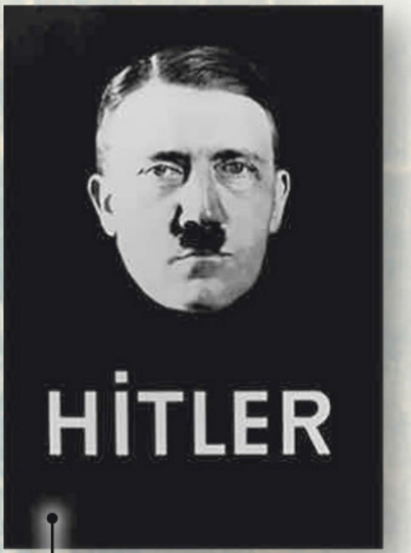
Whether they had a sexual relationship is uncertain, but he behaved very possessively towards her. For example, he often locked her in the apartment or set guards to watch her. The day before her death, Geli had a violent quarrel with Hitler because she wanted to travel to Vienna. Hitler claimed that he then left and travelled to a meeting outside town. The morning after the body was found, the case was closed – the verdict, suicide. The Nazi party rejected all speculation about Hitler's involvement in the affair as propaganda.

One murder that Hitler knew about for sure was that of Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA and its infamous Brownshirts. In 1934, Röhm's paramilitary corps had threatened to side-line Hitler and install Ernst Röhm as Germany's dictator. Hitler struck first: in the Night of the Long Knives, he eliminated the SA's leaders and imprisoned Röhm. The former SA chief was given a choice: commit suicide or be shot. Röhm refused so Hitler ordered him to be executed in his cell on 1st July, 1934.

In 1934, SA leader Ernst Röhm was Hitler's biggest rival for power in Germany.

> The former SA chief was given a choice: commit suicide or be shot.

Propaganda | Election Poster



SIMPLE Instead of the usual political messages, this poster featured only Hitler's face and name. The combination was used to great effect in the 1932 election.

GROUNDBREAKING In a time of colourful, clashing posters, this simple monochromatic design stood out clearly.

Goebbels. As a legal party, the Nazis stood for election in the early summer of 1929. However, the party only really started making progress six months later when the Wall Street stock market crashed. The results were soon felt in Germany: the recovering economy was destroyed, unemployment topped six million and inflation levels reached new heights.

The Nazis seized the moment. Using a well-oiled propaganda machine, they attacked the faltering democracy. Hitler himself was the party's most effective weapon. He clearly felt that he was destined to be Germany's saviour.

Hitler becomes leader

The image of Hitler as a messiah was heightened by his *Deutschlandflug* (Flight over Germany) in 1932, which saw him become almost omnipresent in Germany. From April to November, he attended 148 rallies. The meetings, which often drew 20,000 to 30,000 listeners, felt like religious revival meetings with God's prophet descending from heaven to speak to the people. Written by Goebbels, the euphoric tribute broadcast on that night in January 1933, when Hitler took up the role of chancellor, referred to the new leader in almost religious tones "There he stands with his ministers, Adolf Hitler... the unknown soldier of the World War, the unyielding warrior, the standard-bearer of freedom".

The election, however, had only made Hitler the leader of a coalition government. He did not intend to rule by the grace of others, and instead he immediately organised new elections. Civil unrest and seeming terrorist attacks were used to secure his mandate as the country's new leader, and at the elections on 5th March, 1933, 51.9 percent of voters backed a new Hitler-led government. Immediately after the election, Hitler started to dismantle democracy in the state.

On 23rd March, the Nazis passed the Enabling Act. The law ended democracy and parliament and vested all power in Hitler. The leader of the Nazi party was now the dictator of Germany.

Hitler used every means now at his disposal to reform the German people into an idealised society the like of which he had fantasised about during his travels in Vienna and which he had experienced briefly in the muddy fields at Ypres.

His radio address on 1st February had established his vision, claiming that it was the government's "duty to restablish the unity of spirit and will of our Volk", as Hitler referred to the Germanic peoples.

The Nazification of the German state was profound; all parties other than the Nazi party were banned or dissolved, police and courts came under Nazi control, unions and employers' associations were merged into one Nazi work organization. By 1933, 50,000 communists and social democrats had been imprisoned or put into the newly formed concentration camps. With the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews were deprived of all civil rights, and three years later, the Nazis staged the Crystal Night, killing thousands of Jews and destroying their property.

From 1936, the country rearmed itself; almost half of the considerable public-spending budget was allocated to the military, and the population was now in the Nazi's iron grip. Austria topped the Führer's shopping list for new territories, and Hitler viewed it as a great personal victory when the country's inhabitants voted for Anschluss in 1938, allowing their country to be annexed and incorporated into Germany. The following year, he occupied Czechoslovakia without any international opposition.

It was only on 1st September, 1939, when German troops rolled into Poland, that Britain and France declared war. Hitler had managed to seduce a whole nation into backing a war against the rest of the world – a war that he would ultimately lose. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

Power was seized with violence and propaganda

- The economic crisis – the Great Depression – **prompted Germans to vote for extreme left- and right-wing parties**, like the Communists and the Nazi Party.
- The SA Corps, known as the Brownshirts, **intimidated political opponents with threats and violence**. Such tactics were a crucial step on the road to power.
- Hitler's **message reached millions of Germans** in the run up to the 1933 elections, thanks to propaganda and air travel and wireless.

1924

was the year in which the Nazis changed their political strategy and abandoned the idea of a coup in Germany. Henceforth, power would be secured by democratic means.

WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

Why did Germans vote Hitler into power?

1 During the economic crisis between 1929 and 1932, support built for parties with extreme solutions to Germany's problems. The Communists promised to give the unemployed and working class control of the country and ownership of industry. However, **millions of Germans feared the prospect of a communist Germany**, and the Nazis were considered the only party strong enough to avoid such an outcome. At the same time, the political system, with its low-threshold seat-allocation mechanism, led to eternal turmoil and made it very difficult for democratic parties to create a sustainable government.

After winning under three percent of the votes in 1929, the Nazis gained a whopping 37 percent of the vote in the July 1932 election –testament to how **austerity fosters extremism**. Promises to break the chains of the Versailles Treaty also won popular German support. With his oratory talents, Hitler allowed millions of people to dream of restored German grandeur with a mighty army and navy and the restoration of territory lost following the outbreak of World War I. Against backdrop of economic crisis, the Nazis' promises of stability and prosperity, and the Germans' desire for a strong man at the helm were enough to win the electorate's hearts and minds and for the German people to vote Hitler into power.

The Germans saw the Nazi party as a bulwark against political turmoil, one that offered the chance to make Germany great again.

In the chaos after the war, thousands of war criminals managed to escape.

THE VANISHED

While the Allies roar victoriously through Germany, top Nazi officials begin to look for escape opportunities. Thousands of officers and senior party members – including several war criminals – escape to South America. Many are never seen again.

It was just after 20.00 on 11th May, 1960. A bus came to a halt in an isolated neighbourhood on the northern outskirts of Buenos Aires in Argentina. 54-year-old Adolf Eichmann got off the bus, pulling his collar around his neck to combat the chill wind, and struck out for his home, around 100 metres around the corner. After a hard day at work, he was looking forward to being back home with his family.

The man who had once been a notorious SS-Obersturmführer was a creature of habit. His routine never wavered: each morning he'd head to work at a Mercedes-Benz factory before returning home on the number 203 bus, which at 20.05 dropped him off at the same stop on Route 202. From here it was just a few minutes' walk to the house at 14, Garibaldi Street in the **San Fernando** district.

That evening, Eichmann struggled to see where he was going. The lights in a parked car ahead of him dazzled him, and he averted his gaze by looking at the ground. He passed a car that was apparently broken down. Its bonnet had been opened, and out of the corner of his eye, Eichmann observed a figure bent over apparently fiddling with the engine. Suddenly the man straightened up and stepped out in front of the German. "Un momentito, señor," he said in Spanish.

The words still hung on the air as the stranger leaped onto a startled Eichmann, who tried to step back. Both men tumbled into a ditch at the side of the road, Eichmann roaring like a wild animal.

"It will do you no good, you bastard," the assailant whispered, "this is the end for you!" He placed his hand over the mouth of his prey. Moments later, more hands had grabbed hold of the German exile and a black bag was placed over his head and thrown into the back of the car, which revved off into the darkness. Behind the wheel was an agent from the Israeli secret intelligence service Mossad.

> ”Moments later, more hands had taken hold of the German exile and a black bag was put over his head and thrown into the back of the car.

"Sit still and nothing will happen to you. If you resist, we will shoot you," the agent warned.

Eichmann nodded in response.

The entire kidnapping on Garibaldi Street had taken less than a minute, but the operation was the culmination of an intensive manhunt that had gone on for almost 15 years. After mass murderer Adolf Eichmann vanished from a prisoner of war camp in Germany in 1946, he'd become one of the most sought-after war criminals in history. The architect of the Holocaust had several million lives on his conscience – towards the end of the war, the high-ranking Nazi had even boasted he'd taken

SAN FERNANDO
lies around 20 kilometres north of Buenos Aires and is considered part of the metropolitan area of almost three million inhabitants.

DEATH CAMPS
The six concentration camps where Jews and PoWs were methodologically gassed to death.

care of transporting over five million Jews to the **death camps** in his freight trains. But now time had come for the war criminals to finally account for their unimaginable atrocities.

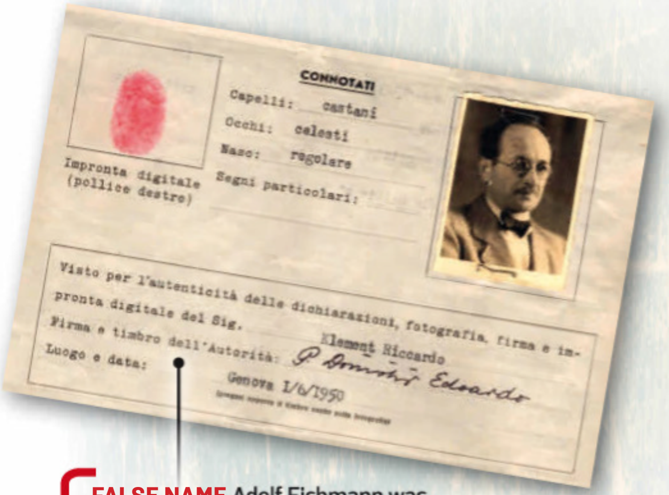
Criminals switched faiths

When Nazi Germany collapsed like a house of cards in May 1945, the ground disappeared under the feet of Hitler's henchmen. Fearful of being brought to justice and punished, thousands of former SS men, Gestapo personnel, concentration camp administrators and other prominent Nazis went into hiding. Eichmann was one of them, along with Josef Mengele – the "Angel of Death" from Auschwitz. The crowd of fleeing Nazis also included Franz Stangl, who converted the Treblinka extermination camp into a 'death factory' where an estimated 900,000 Jews were killed, and Erich Priebke, who was responsible for the cruel massacre of civilians in the Ardeatine caves in Italy.

After Germany's surrender in the summer of 1945, Europe was overwhelmed by a tide of refugees. Millions of people, including KZ camp survivors, people made stateless or homeless plus soldiers, swarmed across the continent's bombed

German prisoners of war in April 1945. Up to five million German soldiers were captured in last year of the war alone.

False documents | Red Cross ID cards



CONNOTATI
Capelli: castani
Occhi: celesti
Naso: regolare
Segni particolari:

Impronta digitale
(pollice destro)

Visto per l'autenticità delle dichiarazioni, fotografia, firma e impronta digitale del Sig. Klement Riccardo
Firma e timbro dell'Autorità: P. Dömöter Edoardo
Luogo e data: Genova 1/6/1950

FALSE NAME Adolf Eichmann was issued an ID card by the Red Cross under the false name of Ricardo Klement. He used the passport on his flight from Europe to Argentina.

roads, and this endless flow of refugees afforded war criminals the perfect place to hide. Like rats from a sinking ship, senior Nazis swarmed away from their homes and cities. Many went underground, adopted a new name and found a job, typically in agriculture. Others disappeared into thin air leaving no trace other than the cruel crimes they'd orchestrated. Some were arrested and put into prisoner of war camps but saw their opportunity to break out and escape justice.

Senior Nazis were fortunate in that an army of helpers stood ready to smuggle them out of Europe, equipped with passenger tickets and false documents. Among their supporters were members of the Catholic Church whose priests feared Communism over anything else. They regarded cooperation with Nazis and fascists a necessary evil to defend the Christian faith against the wicked Reds – whatever the cost.

On Pope Pius XII's initiative, the Vatican had already set up a papal commission for refugees, the *Pontificia Commissione di Assistenza a in Profughi* (Pontifical Commission of Assistance) (PCA), in 1944. Its job was to provide direct aid for the safety of refugees, particularly Catholics. The head of the Austrian branch of the PCA was the Austrian-born bishop Alois Hudal, who resided in Rome and was rector of the Santa Maria dell'Anima church near Piazza Navona in the Italian capital.

Hudal had openly sympathised with Nazism for many years and was known as the "German bishop in Rome" because, during the war, he moved around the Eternal City with the Nazis' new German flag fluttering as a pennant on his car.

In 1936, Hudal published his book *Die Grundlagen des Nationalsozialismus* (The Foundations of National Socialism), in which he attempted to bridge the divide between the Christian Church and Nazism. The bishop sent a copy of his book to Hitler with a handwritten dedication praising "the Architect of German greatness". After the war, Hudal was given the opportunity to translate his infatuation with Nazi ideals into practical action. As a member of the PCA, Hudal was given a pass allowing him to tour the Allied prisoner of war camps, providing him with free and direct access to Nazi war criminals.

In addition to the Austrian branch of the Vatican's refugee commission, other Catholics also participated – first and foremost the Croatian department of the PCA, led by Krunoslav Draganović. Like Hudal, Draganović was a committed fascist, but he was also a devout supporter of the Croatian Ustaša regime – a German puppet state that, from 1941-45, was responsible for the mass genocide of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies.

The PCA's Polish, Slovenian and Hungarian branches were also led by people who detested Communism. As with Hudal and Draganović they were happy to turn a blind eye to the past crimes of war refugees if they were opposed to the abhorrent Reds and otherwise adhered to the Catholic faith. That was the price to be paid for Nazi war criminals – many were Protestant or atheist but converted to Catholicism in return for help escaping. This applied to Protestant Eichmann, who was baptised a Catholic.

In collaboration with Draganović and other Nazi sympathisers, Hudal established a network of escape routes (so-called "ratlines") to help war criminals flee Europe – the favourite getaway destination being Argentina. Here, former Nazis found unique opportunities to both hide and build new lives, far from their homeland and

War criminals received aid from the Pope

A long-held myth holds that the Catholic Church was actively involved in smuggling Nazis out of Europe. Officially, however, senior Vatican figures deny having been involved in the shady human trafficking.

MYTH IN BRIEF

Pope Puis XII was a Nazi sympathiser who pulled strings to help German war criminals escape overseas. A well-developed network enabled the head of the Catholic Church to secure the Nazis' passage to South America.

Pope Pius XII allegedly harboured strong sympathies for the fascist ideology.

The myth is partly true. According to historians, although the Pope and other senior Vatican figures had no official policy of helping fugitive German war criminals, Catholic bishops such as Austrian-born Alois Hudal, who held several key posts in the Vatican, were undoubtedly actively involved in helping Nazis on the run to escape through the so-called ratlines.

In the mid-1980s, the Vatican set up a commission to shed light on the papal state's policies during World War II. The written report – an 11-volume work – saw the Vatican deny having housed war criminals. Likewise, the Vatican denies all knowledge of the Catholic network that helped Hitler's henchmen out of Europe.

The Catholic Church's denials, however, run contrary to a secret report prepared by the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) in 1947. After gaining access to the CIC's archives in 1984, the New York Times published documents showing that during the post-war years the Vatican nourished a general desire to help any refugee "regardless of nationality or... political beliefs as long as they are anti-Communist and pro-Catholic Church". CIC agents clearly had no doubts that the Vatican as an organisation was actively involved in illegal refugee activities. The 1947 report described in detail how the fugitives found shelter in Catholic churches and monasteries, and that the Vatican offices helped the refugees by providing hunted war criminals with new identities and the necessary travel papers for them to escape.

Several historians believe that the Pope probably did know about the illegal activities to some extent.

However, nothing there is nothing to link the Pope with being a Nazis sympathiser. US diplomat Harold Tittmann, who spent World War II in the Vatican, believed the Pope "detested the Nazi ideology". And when Jews started being persecuted in Italy, thousands of Jews found shelter in churches and monasteries throughout the country. After the war, Pius XII was praised by Jewish leaders – including Golda Meir – for the Catholic Church's efforts on behalf of those being persecuted.

> Fugitives found shelter in Catholic churches and monasteries, and... Vatican offices helped the refugees

No refugees were hidden in the Vatican itself.

Allied demands for them to face justice for their crimes against humanity.

Dictator encouraged entry

In June 1946, Argentine general Juan Perón was elected President of Argentina, but he'd already stated – when Minister of Labour in 1944 – that he wanted to encourage German emigration to the country. Perón, a wholehearted nationalist who openly sympathised with European fascists, dreamed of importing large numbers of German scientists and skilled professionals.

The dictator's vision was that German technical knowledge and expertise could boost the industrialisation of Argentina.

For almost 100 years, Germans had emigrated to South America in large numbers, and by the 1930s Argentina was home to just under 250,000 German ex-pats. They were particularly well represented in the nation's capital, Buenos Aries, and one of their main pursuits was Nazism. When the Argentine branch of the Nazi party convened meetings in the Teatro Colón Opera House in the heart of Buenos Aires, several thousand Germans attended. And after the war, numerous German émigré associations stood ready to accept fugitive war criminals and help them gain a foothold on the new continent.

> ” For almost 100 years, Germans had emigrated to South America in large numbers, and by the 1930s Argentina was home to just under 250,000 German ex-pats.

During the summer of 1945, the main ratline was established. The route ran from Germany via Innsbruck in south-western Austria and further across the Alps to either Rome or Genoa. Along the way, a network of local human smugglers escorted the war criminals from one site to the next, from one Catholic monastery to another.

Those who came to Rome temporarily found a safe haven with Bishop Alois Hudal. He almost constantly lodged at least a handful of sought-after Nazis in his palace in Rome.

The papal refugee commission supplied the war criminals with new identity papers and – with these papers in hand – the Nazis were free to apply for Red Cross passports. Because vast numbers of displaced people fleeing Europe in the post-war period had no forms of identification, the Red Cross had been authorised to issue passports. But the international relief organisation was severely stretched and in the chaotic refugee situation had few opportunities to check an applicant's identity. A bishop's signature on someone's ID papers, therefore, weighed heavily in their favour – the Red Cross trusted the PCA implicitly, so without asking questions, the organisation would issue the coveted passports. Once the necessary papers were in order, the war criminals were put on a boat at Genoa, heading across the Atlantic Ocean to South America.

In August 1945, a few months after the end of the war, 22 leading Nazis were tried before an international criminal court in Nuremberg in Germany, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. After a trial that lasted just over a year, the verdict was delivered over the course of two days, on 30th September and 1st October, 1946. 11 of the Nazis – including Hermann Göring – were sentenced to death by hanging.

Among the condemned were Hitler's personal secretary, Martin Bormann, who was sentenced in absentia. Some days after Hitler's death in the Führerbunker on 30th April, 1945, Bormann had vanished without trace in the chaos of Berlin. According to persistent rumours, he'd fled the country, possibly to South America.

Bormann was therefore hunted fiercely – on the same footing as notorious war criminals such as Eichmann, Josef Mengele and Franz Stangl.

Theories about Bormann varied widely: he was a monk in Rome, a farmer in Spain, a docker in Buenos Aries, a hunter in the Tyrol or a regular at the Ali Baba nightclub in Asunción in Paraguay where, according to an alleged eyewitness, he kept company with Mengele. All ideas, however crazy they sounded, were equally plausible – the fact is that the "Brown Eminence", as he was dubbed by the Third Reich's leadership, had disappeared from the surface of the earth.

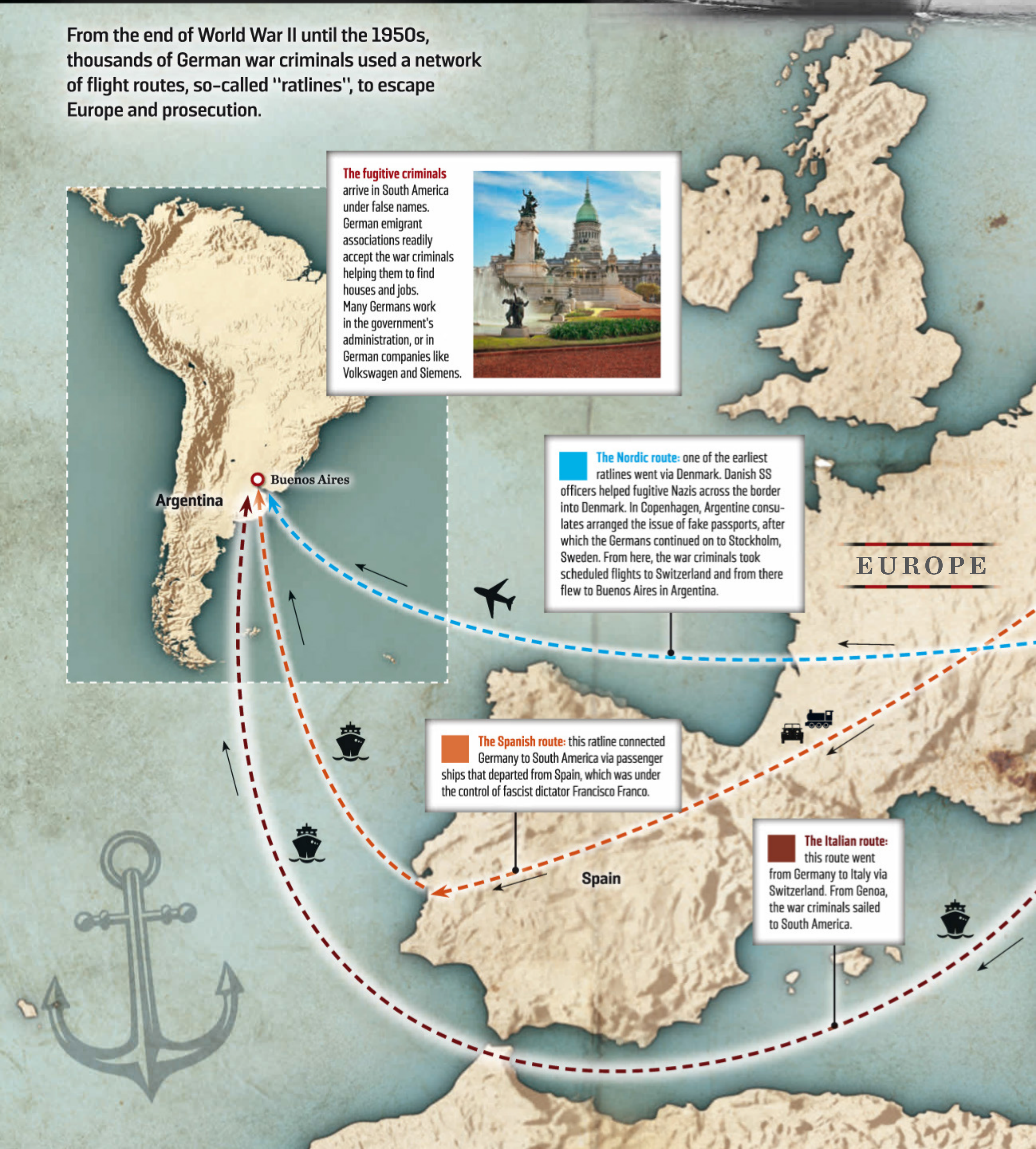
By order of US President Truman, FBI agent Francis E Cosby chased rumours in July and August 1948 that Bormann was in one of the German outposts in Argentina or Uruguay. One source had suggested that Bormann was staying on the edges under the name of Don Martin, but despite a thorough search, Crosby was forced to give up. The Brown Eminence had sunk into the ground – literally, it would turn out.

Skull discovered after 27 years

Along with a host of other Nazis on the night of 2nd May, 1945, Bormann had fled the Führerbunker, attempting to evade Soviet forces. He'd last been seen by the railway where Berlin's

Nazis escaped via three routes

From the end of World War II until the 1950s, thousands of German war criminals used a network of flight routes, so-called "ratlines", to escape Europe and prosecution.



The fugitive criminals arrive in South America under false names. German emigrant associations readily accept the war criminals helping them to find houses and jobs. Many Germans work in the government's administration, or in German companies like Volkswagen and Siemens.

🟦 **The Nordic route:** one of the earliest ratlines went via Denmark. Danish SS officers helped fugitive Nazis across the border into Denmark. In Copenhagen, Argentine consulates arranged the issue of fake passports, after which the Germans continued on to Stockholm, Sweden. From here, the war criminals took scheduled flights to Switzerland and from there flew to Buenos Aires in Argentina.

🟧 **The Spanish route:** this ratline connected Germany to South America via passenger ships that departed from Spain, which was under the control of fascist dictator Francisco Franco.

🟫 **The Italian route:** this route went from Germany to Italy via Switzerland. From Genoa, the war criminals sailed to South America.

Hauptbahnhof (Central Station) is now located. During an excavation 27 years later, in December 1972, construction workers found two skulls, one with teeth that appeared to match Bormann's.

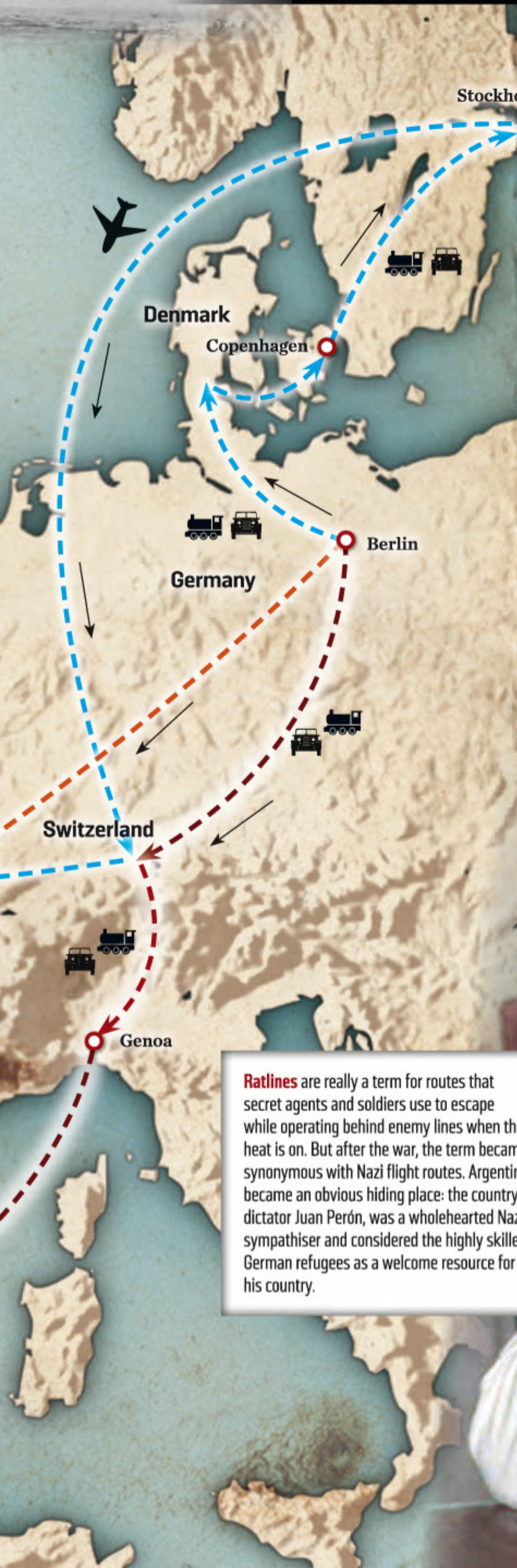
"We have proved it beyond a shadow of a doubt", announced Dr Heinz Spengler, director of the West Berlin Institute for Forensic Medicine, who'd headed up the investigation.

Despite Spengler's categorical statement, not everyone was 100 percent confident. One sceptic was Austrian Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, who said he must "accept the proof which has been assembled with German thoroughness, but I have my doubts on purely personal feelings".

It wasn't until 1998 that the matter was settled beyond all doubt; when DNA samples revealed the bone fragments were Bormann's.

While Nazi hunters spent the late 1940s looking for Bormann's ghost, other leading Nazis also managed to escape justice. Among these were the Austrian SS officer Franz Stangl, commandant of the Treblinka concentration camp, where around 900,000 were murdered in its gas chambers.

After the war, Stangl was detained by the Americans, who at the time were unaware of his role in the mass murders at the extermination camp. In May 1948, he successfully escaped from an open prison in Austria – and like other Nazis knew exactly where to go: to the Santa Maria



Ratlines are really a term for routes that secret agents and soldiers use to escape while operating behind enemy lines when the heat is on. But after the war, the term became synonymous with Nazi flight routes. Argentina became an obvious hiding place: the country's dictator Juan Perón, was a wholehearted Nazi sympathiser and considered the highly skilled German refugees as a welcome resource for his country.

Former General Juan Perón was Argentina's president from 1946 to 1955.

dell'Anima church in Rome. After escaping on foot over the Alps and staying at various monasteries, Stangl arrived in Rome in the summer of 1948, where Hudal held out his hands and greeted the SS officer with the words: "You must be Franz Stangl. I was expecting you."

Within the space of just 14 days Hudal succeeded in obtaining the war criminal a Red Cross passport, passage and exit visa to Syria, where Stangl would begin his new life. Hudal had even taken care of employment with a job at a textile mill in Damascus.

Stangl's stay in Syria was a relatively short-lived one. After losing his job, the former camp commandant emigrated to São Paulo in Brazil in 1951, where after starting out with another textile company, got a job with a Volkswagen subsidiary – in both cases he was hired under his real name.

The Angel of Death put to sea

Although his crimes paled in comparison to those of Stangl's, Erich Priebke's misdeeds were bad enough. In March 1944, the SS captain led a gruesome massacre at the **Ardeatine caves** outside Rome, where 355 civilians were murdered in reprisals for the Italian partisans' killing of 33 German police officers. In groups of five, the civilians were taken deep inside the caves and shot at close range. As the pile of corpses grew, new victims were forced to climb the bloody heap before becoming part of it.

ARDEATINE CAVES
An old mine where Italians extracted volcanic ash used for cement production.

After the war, Priebke had been held in various British prison camps in Italy but managed to escape in 1946. Like so many other former Nazis, Priebke received help from Hudal, who by means of fake identity papers, secured him a Red Cross passport in the name of Otto Pape. On 23rd October, 1948, the war criminal boarded the ship *San Giorgio*, which was ready to depart the quay in Genoa for Argentina. The Argentine entry papers Hudal had acquired for Priebke were numbered 211712/48. The next number on the list – 211713/48 – belonged to a man named Helmut Gregor. This was in fact a cover name for Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, better known as the "Angel of Death of Auschwitz", and one of the most hunted and hated war criminals of the 20th Century.

As an SS physician, Mengele performed horrific experiments on prisoners, often with fatal consequences, and his subjects had tended to be children, twins and dwarfs. At the end of the war, Mengele went underground and found work on a farm in Mangolding, Bavaria.

In October 1946, when Mengele learned about the death sentences handed down at Nuremberg, he abandoned all hope of living freely in Germany. He feared ending up with a noose around his neck and decided to flee to Italy to secure a one-way ticket to South America. With the help of Nazi sympathisers, priests and a human smuggler calling himself Kurt, Mengele secured both a Red Cross passport and entry visa to Argentina, and on 25th May, 1949 stood on the deck of the *North King* as Genoa receded into the distance. At the immigration office in Buenos Aries, Mengele presented himself as Helmut Gregor, a 38-year-old German mechanic who had come to Argentina to seek work. The authorities accepted his story and let Mengele into the country, allowing him to embark on a new life in South America.

Eichmann, chief architect of the largest single genocide in history, also went underground after the war, supporting himself first as a ▶

Continued on page 116

The most-wanted war criminals

SS MEMBERS The elite corps, recognised by their infamous black uniform, were responsible – among other things – for running the six Nazi extermination camps. Their number included SS camp commandant Franz Stangl, who was one of the architects behind the killing of 900,000 Jews in the Treblinka KZ camp.

EINSATZ GRUPPEN These mobile death squads, which comprised of up to 1,000 men, followed in the wake of the army and had the task of 'cleaning' occupied territories. They were active in the initial phase of the Jewish genocide and were estimated to have killed 1.5 million people.

KZ CAMP DOCTORS Scientists and doctors in the KZ camps performed cruel, mutilating and often lethal medical trials on hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Some of the worst experiments were led by Josef Mengele, known as the "Angel of Death", who was a camp doctor in Auschwitz.

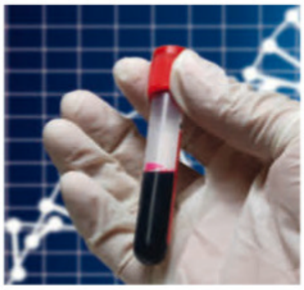
GESTAPO Germany's secret police were behind thousands of killings and deportation of hundreds of thousands of civilians from occupied countries to extermination camps. Among the most notorious of the Gestapo was Klaus Barbie – the so-called "Butcher of Lyon".

Simple test revealed identity

A body can be identified using a DNA profile – known as a genetic fingerprint. By comparing DNA from a deceased war criminal with genetic material from a close relative, the researchers are still capable of identifying bodies almost 75 years after the end of the war.

The human genome consists of a series of microscopic, elongated chromosomes in the nuclei that contain DNA. The genetic code is identical in all body cells and consists of four different chemical building blocks, the so-called nucleobases: adenine, guanine, thymine and cytosine. Every human's DNA is unique, and by analysing selected parts of their DNA, scientists can identify a person. These DNA profiles are an effective tool for historians hunting Nazi criminals. By comparing DNA from a piece of skull suspected to be that of Martin Bormann with DNA from a tissue sample donated by a relative in 1998, researchers could definitively state that the remains were those of Martin Bormann.

Securing a biological trace



1 Researchers can only carry out a DNA analysis if biological traces containing DNA are present. Traces include tissue, hair, skin cells or blood – all of which comprise microscopic cells with genes that are chemically constituted by DNA.

Duplicating DNA

2 Even microscopic amounts of biological material – a single hair or tiny amount of saliva, for example – are enough for DNA analysis. The DNA can be multiplied thousands of times using the so-called polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique, giving researchers billions of copies of the DNA required to create a genetic fingerprint.

DNA is profiled

3 DNA is sorted by lengths using a technique called electrophoresis. This creates a ribbon-like pattern, a kind of bar code that illustrates the genetic material being examined. Researchers effectively create a genetic fingerprint that's as unique as a conventional one. If two DNA profiles produce a close match, then the result is extremely reliable: the likelihood of a random second person matching that DNA profile is less than one in a million.

DNA from living relatives helps confirm the identity of war criminals.

INTERVIEW

Professor Efraim Zuroff, a US-born Israeli historian has been a Nazi hunter since 1980 and is head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, Israel. Zuroff is known as the world's last Nazi hunter.

How many criminals are still at large?

Since the end of the war, Nazi hunters have searched for escaped war criminals all over the world and have tracked down well over 1,000 Nazis. Among the most notable caught is Adolf Eichmann. But the search for the last survivors continues – it's a race against time.

How many Nazi war criminals are still alive and free? Do you have an exact number or estimate?

No one knows, because there are no reliable statistics. Neither do exact figures exist about the number of Nazis who committed war crimes during World War II.

The most notable figure for us Nazi hunters is the dramatic improvement in life expectancy that has taken place – we live statistically longer than ever before. As a result, more Nazi war criminals are alive than anyone would have been able to foresee years ago.

Who, in your opinion, is the most notorious Nazi war criminal who is still alive and not yet brought to justice?

There are not many of the most notorious Nazi war criminals alive – that is, top people like Mengele or Eichmann. The worst war criminals were high up in the ranks of the Nazis, and in order to reach the top they had to have reached a certain age. That means they are all dead today – over 70 years since the war ended.

Will you and the Simon Wiesenthal Center continue to chase the Nazis who have escaped prosecution until they are all convicted or dead? In your opinion how long do you think the hunt will continue?

We will continue to assist in prosecuting war criminals for as long as it's possible. For many years, former Nazis in Germany could escape lawsuits. But a crucial turning point occurred in 2011 when a German judgement against a former guard in the Sobibor extermination camp, John Demjanjuk, paved the way, so it's now possible to prosecute people simply because they worked in the Nazi camps and without having to prove that they participated directly in the extermination.

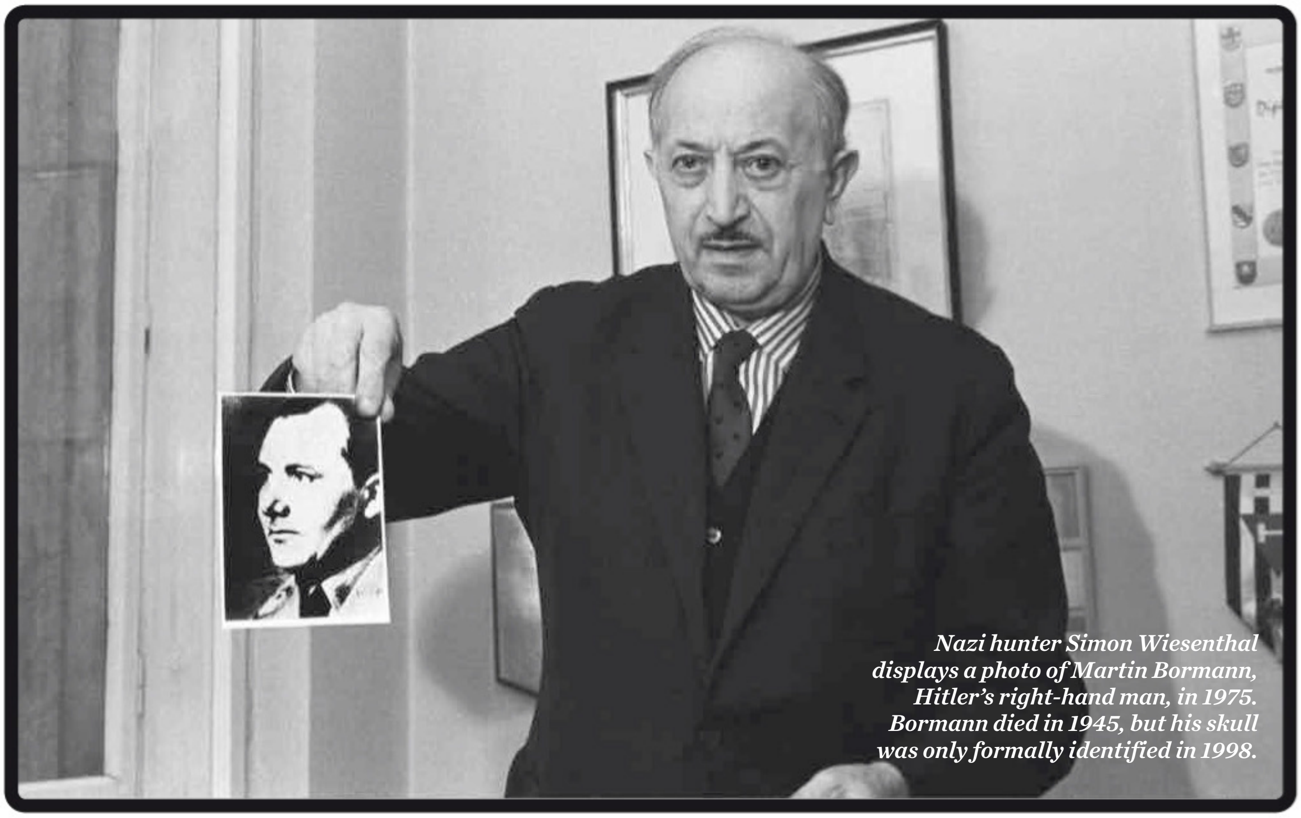
Simon Wiesenthal survived the Holocaust and after the war dedicated his life to hunting war criminals.

Who is the biggest fish, the most notorious Nazi war criminal that Simon Wiesenthal Center has helped to capture and bring to justice?

The most significant Nazis found by the Simon Wiesenthal Center are the German Josef Schwammberger, commandant of three camps in Poland, and Dinko Šakić, one of the commandants of the concentration camp in Jasenovac, Croatia. Both were mass murderers, and both fled after the war and settled in Argentina.

Schwammberger was extradited to Germany in 1990 and was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of seven and complicity in the killing of 32 others. He died aged 92 in prison in December 2004.

The Croatian Dinko Šakić was extradited in 1998 from Argentina and shortly after he was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He died in prison in July 2008 at the age of 86.



Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal displays a photo of Martin Bormann, Hitler's right-hand man, in 1975. Bormann died in 1945, but his skull was only formally identified in 1998.

Do you think there are members of the Nazi SS mobile death squads who might still be alive?

If so, are you looking for them, and do you have any idea of where they might be hiding?

In the last 18 months alone, I have tracked down four men in Germany who were members of the Einsatzgruppen, which between the years 1941-43 killed around 1.5 million Jews and other "enemies of the German Reich". Three of them – Kurt Gosdek, Herbert Wahler and Wilhelm Karl Friedrich Hoffmeister – were part of Einsatzgruppe C, which operated in the Ukraine, while the fourth who was tracked down was, Heinz Udert, who served in Einsatzgruppe B in Belarus.

In 1961, Wiesenthal opened a centre in Vienna, which still documents Nazi crimes today and tries to track down missing Nazis.

How many war criminals in total do you think managed to flee from justice after the war? And where did they typically go?

No one knows how many people were able to escape and thus avoid prosecution, since not much research has been done in this area. But we know that the criminals fled to many places around the world. The most notorious Nazis fled to South America, to Argentina, or to Syria or Egypt.

Does the Simon Wiesenthal Center receive threats, emails or letters from people who disagree with your efforts? Or do you find that the centre's and your work is mainly appreciated?

Unfortunately, we receive numerous hate emails and receive many negative comments on our social platforms – and I have also received numerous hateful messages personally. But the number of people backing our efforts to find fugitive war criminals far surpasses the opponents.

What do you think is the most important lesson that humanity today can learn from the Holocaust?

We can learn about the dangers of anti-Semitism, racism and fascism – and our obligation to make every effort to oppose these phenomena.

lumberjack and then as a poultry farmer. But in the spring of 1950, he abandoned his chickens and fled to Italy. With the Vatican's help, Eichmann acquired a passport in the name of Ricardo Klement and a visa for Argentina. On 17th June, 1950 he donned a soft hat, bow tie and suit to board the passenger ship *Giovanni C*, which set sail from Genoa to Buenos Aries.

He hoped that a safe and carefree life awaited him, but Eichmann's life in Argentina would be a stark contrast to his opulent existence in the Third Reich. Here, he would be forced to scrape a living any way he could, working variously as a caretaker, rabbit breeder and mechanic.

Eichmann lived a quiet life along with his wife Vera and their three sons. In 1958, the family bought a plot of land at Garibaldi Street in San Fernando, a Buenos Aries suburb. Eichmann and his sons built a one-storey house with exceptionally thick walls and only a handful of windows, mostly facing away from the street. Eichmann wanted to keep a low profile – he was aware he was one of the world's most wanted men.

> ” Eichmann... built a one-storey house with exceptionally thick walls and only a handful of windows.

The escaped war criminals in South America knew that an army of Nazi hunters – including the tireless Simon Wiesenthal – had devoted their lives to tracking them down and prosecuting them, even if they travelled to the farthest reaches of the planet. But as the years went by, the Nazis began to drop their guard. It's why the thought never occurred to Eichmann that something might have been afoot when he stepped off the bus in San Fernando in May 1960.

But as early as 1957, German public prosecutor Fritz Bauer, who was a Jew, had received a tip-off that Eichmann was hiding in Argentina. Fearful that former Nazis might warn Eichmann, Bauer contacted the Israeli Foreign Ministry. From here, the case was handed to the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, who dispatched a taskforce to capture Eichmann and bring him to Israel.

The mission succeeded: the agents snatched Eichmann in the street and took him to Israel, where he arrived on 22nd May, 1960. Eichmann stood trial almost one year later, on 11th April, 1961, and on 11th December that year was found guilty of crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity and war crimes. He was sentenced to death by hanging, and a few minutes past midnight on 1st June, 1962, the sentence was carried out in a Jerusalem prison.

Camp commandant died in prison

In the hope of killing two birds with one stone, the Mossad agents – while still hunting for Eichmann

Insight | War criminals

Four of WWII's most notorious criminals managed to escape to South America.

FRANZ STANGL was commandant of the extermination camps at Treblinka and Sobibor.

ERICH PRIEBKE organised killing of 335 Italians in reprisal for an attack on German police.

Eichmann evaded justice for 15 years

1945

After Nazi Germany's capitulation, Adolf Eichmann is arrested and ends up in a US prisoner of war camp. Here he is given a set of false papers under the name of Otto Eckmann.

1946

Eichmann fears being caught and flees with a new identity: Otto Heninger. He settles at Luneburg Heide near Hamburg and later moves south, where he works as a lumberjack until 1950.

1950

With the help of former SS officers, Eichmann escapes to Argentina. Here he lives for several years under the name of Ricardo Klement. His final place of work is a Mercedes-Benz factory.

ADOLF EICHMANN architect of the Holocaust, responsible for the deaths of over six million Jews.

JOSEF MENGELE, in the middle, was behind thousands of cruel medical experiments on men, women and children from the KZ camps. To the left stands Richard Baer, and right Rudolf Höss – both served as commandants at Auschwitz. Hay was tried and executed in 1946-47, while Baer went underground near Hamburg and was only captured in 1960.

– also attempted to locate Josef Mengele. They'd been informed that the high-ranking former Nazi lived in a wealthy district in Buenos Aries, but when they arrived at the address given, Mengele had long since departed. In June 1959, West Germany formally sent an extradition request to Argentina for Mengele. Newspapers all over the world had relayed numerous accounts of his monstrous misdeeds, and with the world burning at his feet, Mengele fled first to Paraguay and then Brazil. There he managed to stay hidden, not least thanks to protection from some German exiles. Franz Stangl, Treblinka's notorious commandant, was already resident in Brazil. He was also fiercely hunted, and in February 1964 Wiesenthal was put on the trail to Stangl's hideaway. The Nazi hunter had given a press conference on the so-called *Aktion T4* (T4 Action) Nazi euthanasia programme, which involved murdering physically and mentally impaired people. After describing Stangl's role in the killings, Wiesenthal was approached by a family member who revealed he was now living in Brazil. Who this person was is unclear, but seems likely to have been the war criminal's estranged son-in-law or his wife's cousin.

It took three years to track down Stangl: after parking his car in front of his home in São Paulo on the evening of 28th February, 1967, Stangl found himself surrounded by Brazilian police officers who dragged him from the car in handcuffs and on to jail. Later he was extradited for trial to Düsseldorf in West Germany where, on 22nd December, 1970, the High Court sentenced him to life imprisonment for having contributed to the murder of at least 400,000 Jews during his tenure as camp commandant in Treblinka. A lifetime in prison only lasted six months however – on

1960

In a carefully planned operation, agents from the Israeli intelligence service Mossad kidnap Eichmann and transport him to Israel where he is put on trial.

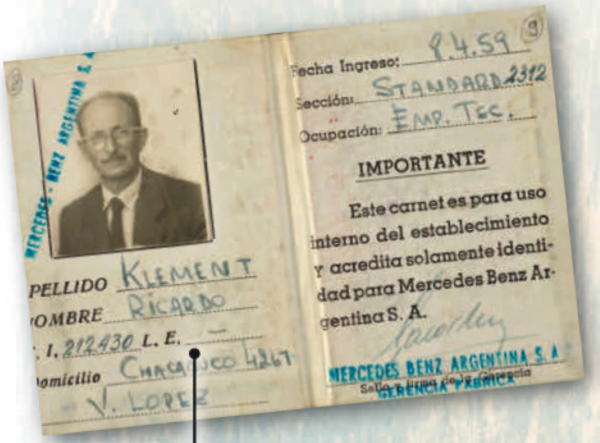
1961

On 15th December, Eichmann is found guilty of crimes against the Jewish people. The trial lasts 56 days and includes testimony from 112 eyewitnesses.

1962

At midnight between 31st May and 1st June, 1962, Eichmann is hanged and cremated shortly after. His ashes are then thrown into the Mediterranean outside Israeli waters.

False documents | Work ID



MERCEDES - BENZ ARGENTINA S.

PELLIDO KLEMENT
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omicilio CHACABUCO 4261
V. LOPEZ

Fecha Ingreso: 9.4.59
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Sello y firma de la Gerencia

MERCEDES-BENZ
Eichmann's work ID from the Mercedes-Benz factory in Argentina, where he worked after the war. Issued in 1950.

28th June, 1971, Stangl died of heart failure in his cell.

Drowned during swim

The capture and sentence of Stangl put the hunt for Nazi criminals back in the world's headlines. In Brazil, Mengele sensed he was potentially next in line and erected a watchtower five metres high outside his home, 30 kilometres north of São Paulo. There he would sit for hours and gaze out anxiously across the landscape, while on those rare occasions he went for a walk, it was always in the company of a pack of stray dogs.

After living in the same place for around 15 years, Mengele began moving from place to place in the mid-1970s and ended up staying with a German couple, Wolfram and Liselotte Bossert, who lived near the popular Bertioga beach, 100 kilometres south of São Paolo.

On a warm late summer's day on 7th February, 1979, the 67-year-old former Nazi took a cool dip in the Atlantic waves, but suddenly appeared to be in trouble. Wolfram Bossert tried to rescue his friend, but he was too late: by the time Bossert got Mengele ashore, a massive stroke had killed him. The body was laid to rest in the graveyard at Embu, just outside São Paulo. News of his death remained a well-kept secret. Independent Nazi hunters, intelligence services, the West German police and the Ministry of Justice all continued to search for Mengele based on the belief that he was still alive. Mengele was reportedly spotted in Greece, Egypt, Spain and Paraguay, and the hunt only culminated in 1985. A sharp mind came up with the idea of searching the homes of one of Mengele's loyal supporters in Günzburg, Bavaria. In the home of Hans Sedlmeier, police came across an old letter from Wolfgang Bossert, which revealed that Joseph Mengele was dead.

On 6th June, 1985, hundreds of journalists and photographers gathered at the cemetery in Embu, where three gravediggers unearthed the grave belonging to "Wolfgang Gerhard". After smashing the coffin lid to expose the bones, a Brazilian forensic scientist lifted the skull and held it up in front of the photographers.

"We should be able to identify the race, height, and colour without much difficulty," he said.

On 22nd June, an international team of forensic scientists reported that the "skeleton was that of Josef Mengele within a reasonable scientific certainty". Any remaining doubt was eliminated in April 1992 after a team of British scientists successfully matched DNA from the skeleton in Embu with Rolf Mengele, Josef Mengele's son.

Erich Priebke, the SS captain responsible for the massacre in the Ardeatine Caves, lived for almost 50 years as a free man in Argentina. But after an interview with ABC News reporter Sam Donaldson on the streets of his home town of Bariloche one day in April 1994, the net began to tighten around him. The Nazi criminal agreed to speak about the massacre in 1944 and claimed he was just following Gestapo orders. In addition, Priebke emphasised that the victims were terrorists. He clearly wasn't struggling with his conscience.

After the broadcast, the Italian authorities demanded Priebke stand trial, and in 1996 he arrived on Italian soil. Initially, the court absolved him – somewhat sensationally – on the grounds the case was subject to statute of limitations. But after the prosecution appealed the verdict, the hammer finally fell: in March 1998, Priebke was sentenced to life imprisonment – but under house arrest as he was deemed too old to serve his time in prison. Priebke lived on until the age of 100, dying in October 2013 of natural causes in his house in Rome. His final wish was to be buried back in Argentina, but the Argentine authorities denied him. Nor did the Vatican – whose bishop Alois Hudal had helped the war criminal escape to South America in the first place – want anything to do with the dead Nazi. It banned any funeral ceremony involving Roman Catholic rites. The case ended up with the Italian authorities seizing the coffin and burying Priebke in a secret location. Thus in death, the war criminal also succeeded in going underground. ■

WHAT WE KNOW **FOR SURE**

Fugitives travelled using fake Red Cross documents

- Until 1951, the Red Cross issued over **120,000 passports** for refugees.
- Around **5,000 Nazis fled** to Argentina after the war.
- Historians estimate that **nearly 2,000 Nazi criminals are still alive** and have escaped punishment.
- In 1952 Catholic Bishop Alois Hudal **was forced to resign** from his official post after working with the Nazis.

9,000

war criminals fled to South America in the wake of World War II. In addition to Germans, Croats and Russians also helped fuel the Nazi war machine.

WHAT WE **STILL DON'T KNOW**

Did the secret ODESSA network really exist?

1 It's uncertain whether the mythical escape organisation ODESSA existed. ODESSA is an abbreviation for *Organization Der Ehemaligen SS-Angehörigen* (Organisation for Former SS Members). The network became widely known when Frederick Forsyth published thriller novel *The ODESSA File* in 1972. Forsyth based his bestseller on conversations with Austrian Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, who himself was convinced of the network's existence and had described it in several of his books. The organisation was allegedly founded in Germany around 1946 and was initially intended to **sneak senior Nazis** out of the country so that they could escape any punishment.

Did Mengele continue his experiments?

2 According to persistent rumours, the Angel of Death from Auschwitz continued to perform operations in exile. **In 1958 Mengele was arrested in Buenos Aires,** suspected of contributing to a teenager's death after an abortion, but he denied the allegations and was released without charge.

In the years that followed, stories flourished that Mengele was experimenting to create a superior breed of blonde and blue-eyed Aryans.

What happened to the Gestapo chief?

3 Heinrich Müller was head of the Gestapo and **participated in both the planning and execution of the Holocaust.** His fate has never been determined. Conflicting rumours place him both in the Soviet Union working as an agent for the Nazis' arch-enemy, and South America, where he worked either as a tour guide or in a hardware store.

Gestapo Müller, as he was called, was **last seen in the Führerbunker** on 1st May, 1945, the day after Hitler's suicide. Witnesses say that he had talked about killing himself, while others were equally certain that he'd ventured out into the war-torn city and been killed.

Heinrich Müller's remains have never been found, but historians believe he was killed in Berlin in 1945.

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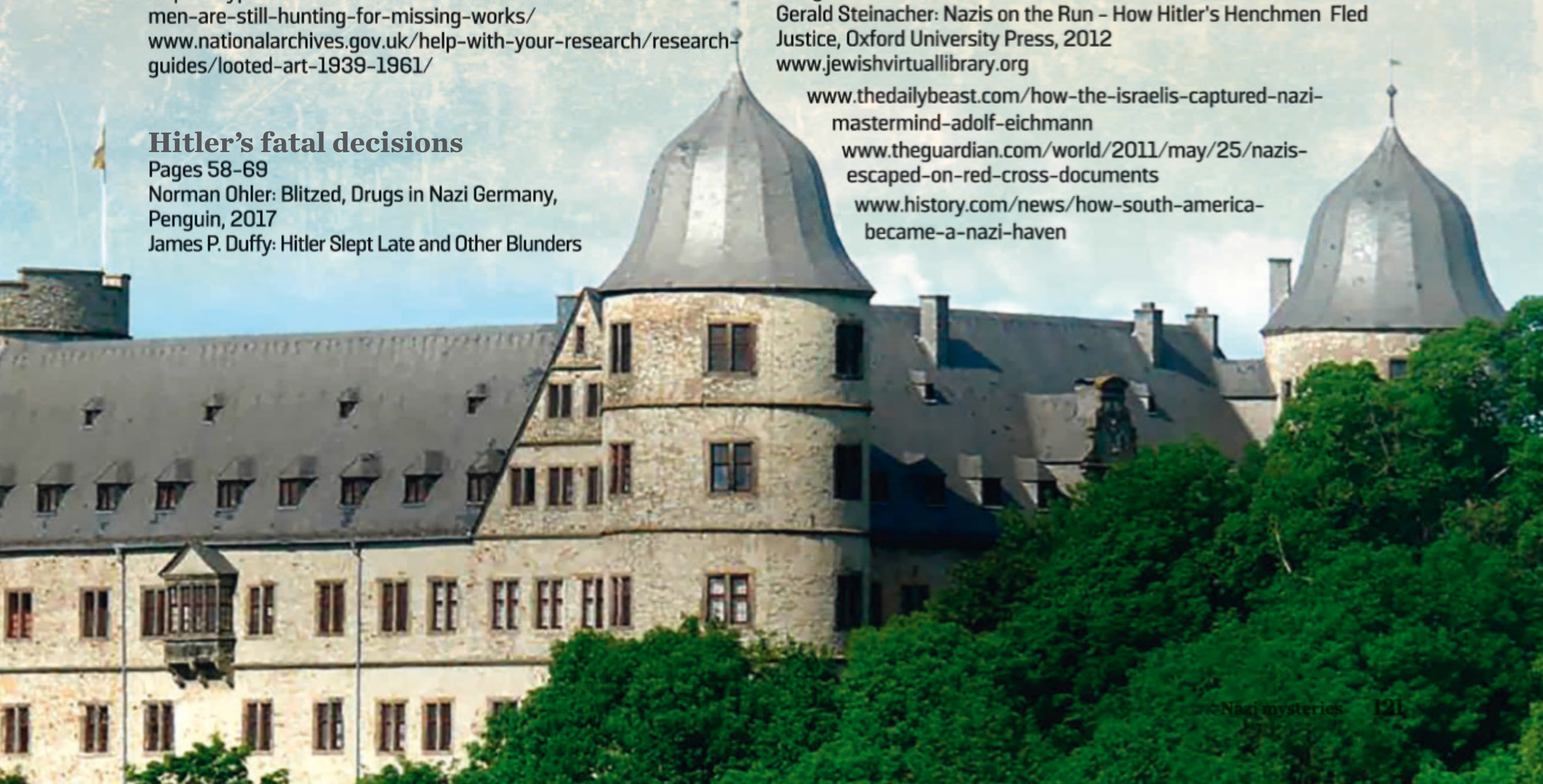

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“There was a flash of light… bright as hundreds of bolts of lightning… then we noticed a powerful wind”

This was the account of one eye witnesses who claimed the Nazis were experimenting with nuclear bombs towards the end of the war. Alongside testimony from other observers and new findings in the archives, it changes what we thought we knew about the Third Reich’s weapon programme. Could other so-called ‘facts’ about the Nazis also be wrong? Rumours persist about everything from missing trains filled with gold to Hitler’s escape to Argentina in 1945. Using historical evidence we seek the truth among the myths. Read about the hunt for missing Nazi criminals and Himmler’s occult rituals, and find out just how far the Germans got in their top-secret weapons research.

From 1919 to 1934
ENEMIES WERE REMOVED ONE BY ONE
1919
1921
1923
1924
1929-30
1930
1933
SCIENCE EXPLAINS
Hitler's body
How were Hitler's last remains studied?
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The charred bones are gone
Modern crematoria destroy all DNA
Hitler's ashes and bones could have talked
Skull does not give a definitive answer
The offensive in the Soviet ... and by December 1941, ... pushed the Germans out of Moscow ... endlessly pondering solutions to the ...

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